LITERATURE AND ECOLOGY: A STUDY OF WOLE SOYINKA'S *A DANCE OF THE FORESTS* AND *THE BEATIFICATION OF AN AREA BOY*

BY

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DECLARATION

This is to attest that I Hassan, Onyinoyi Bashirat MA/ARTS/01103/2008-2009 have solely undertaken this research. This is also an attestation that, this is the outcome of my original work, which has not been presented to any tertiary institution in fulfilling the partial requirements for the award of any degree.

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CERTIFICATION

We certify that this thesis with the title, Literature and Ecology: A Study of Wole Soyinka's A *Dance of the Forests* and *The Beatification of an Area Boy* has been duly presented by Hassan, Onyinoyi Bashirat MA/ARTS/01103/2008-2009 of the Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and has been approved by the examiners.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my father, late Shehu Hadi Abdulraheem and also to the memory of my academic father and supervisor late Prof Y.A Nasidi. You have both nurtured this dream of mine and have touched my life in a special way that will never be forgotten. May your good souls rest in perfect peace.

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ABSTRACT

The current crisis of ecology and environmental pollution have gripped the attention and aroused the concern of many people alive today. Studies show that our imprudent behaviour towards, and utilisation of, Nature have pushed the world into a crisis that has not only led to the gradual destruction of our ecology and its very capacity to sustain life, but also threatens our survival. There is also the socio-economic and psychological dimension to the crisis. Many countries and organisations have endeavoured to prevent the further spread of the ecological crisis but in spite of all efforts, the ecological crisis continues to mount. This realisation has prompted scholars in various disciplines to open up ecological/environmental dimensions to their respective disciplines as a way of contributing to environmental restoration. Literary scholars have also joined the debate through the field of ecocriticism. This study attempts to explore the ways in which Soyinka participates and responds to the current ecological challenges. Using ecocriticism as a theoretical tool, the study contends that Soyinka's philosophy which informs his literary works is Nature sensitive and attempts to address the basic presupposition at the roots of the ecological crisis. The study reveals that the current ecological crisis is a disturbing manifestation of the dangers inherent in a change in the structure of the relationship between man and Nature which currently assumes that humans are separate from Nature. Through his literary works, we get to see an alternative worldview which shows that man exists in a cosmic totality and is a part of Nature. The study also suggests that a consciousness of this fact enables us to live in greater peace and harmony with Nature; thus the call for a reassessment of some of the basic premises upon which our current practices are grounded.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

PREAMBLE

Humans all over the world who have the privilege of witnessing the modern era are inheritors of a magnificent history. The period marks not only the economic ascent of some third world countries but also ecological disorder and violent processes of change that challenge humans at every level imaginable. The 20th/21st century man is the recipient of the legacy of industrialization and the subsequent modernity. Although extraordinary and important advances have been made through the age of industrialization, the accompanying changes in our lifestyles and social circumstances beyond doubt have led to significant changes in our outlook and understanding of ourselves in relation to the world which we inhabit. The prevailing outlook of the world especially after the age of industrialization is to perceive humans as somehow apart from 'Nature', as isolated individuals and discrete entities. This profound detachment from our surroundings has led to ecological crisis which is one of the greatest global problems of our time.

The issue of ecology has therefore come to play a central intellectual role in our present age. It refers to the study of the relationships between humans, animals, plants and their setting. This relationship affirms the premise that people and the planet are interrelated. Unarguable however, ecological crisis is one of the most pressing and timely concerns at the turn of the 21st century. The word 'environment', in the light of our argument, adds a human dimension to the idea of ecology. It brings out the particular interaction of the human being with his or her habitat defined as the life sustaining surroundings that are given to the people and that are partially the result of their labour. Today the earth is experiencing a lot of ecological problems and it appears that the current ecological crisis is a reflection of man's relationship with the natural world.

Thomas Berry in Sullivan (1999: xi) refers to this relationship as, "the relation of humans to the non-human components of the world that we live in. Something is not functioning properly since the multitude of living beings around us seem to be dying out". Pieces of evidence of this flawed relationship are found all over the world: there are recorded cases of the shrinking of tropical forests, desertification due to land mismanagement, the reduction of the underground water tables, the increase in the death rates of life in lakes and rivers, the rise in global temperature, the rise in sea levels and above all, the gradual depletion of the ozone layer due to carbon emission and environmental pollution. The consequences of all these are numerous. These include health problems like: skin cancer, diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera, typhoid and malaria. Others include the socio-economic implications like: increase in crime rates, poverty and corruption throughout the world. These examples are a small sample of the current data that indicates the present ecological decay.

With respect to Africa as well as other third world countries, the dimension of the global ecological crisis has an inimitable character. The continent has a complex history of manifold challenges in her cultural and political evolution. The duo factors of colonialism (a subsidiary of the industrialization/modernity project) and some internal dynamics, creates conditions that are both exploitative and dangerous to human life. Nigeria, for instance has witnessed lots of ecological challenges in recent times although many of Nigeria's problems are typical of developing states. Following the discovery of oil in Nigeria and subsequent independence, Nigeria has been engaged in the enterprise of nation building and this process of nation building has resulted in severe ecological crisis. For instance, 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.

There is an urgent need to question how man has created a society filled with toxins and pollutants so much so that it affects man negatively. Going by Commoner's (1979) first law of Ecology that states that, "everything is connected to everything else", one realizes that whatever destroys one affects the other, thus the destruction of ecological systems has led to biological and cultural destruction and disgrace so much so that Ichiyo (1999) argues that, the slogan at the beginning of the 20th century was progress; the cry at the end of the 20th century is survival. The acceptance of the reality of the ecological crisis is now a global phenomenon and the causes can be traced to human activities. If left unchecked, it can lead to disastrous consequences. Thus protecting and preserving the integrity of the global ecosystem has become the most urgent task of our times.

Literature as a field of study cannot be left unaffected by the turn of events, for the sustenance of ecology will require a transvaluation in which Literature must play a part. In this increasingly industrialized global world, Literature plays a vital role in teaching the value of the natural world. Although ecology/environmental studies and Literature are considered as two different disciplines (the former science based and latter arts); Literature is a cultural activity that unlocks the imagination and compels one to think and in the process, it reveals and emphasizes truths that are sometimes exigent. According to Hsien Yu (2009:1),

> Literature is the marriage of rational knowledge and the perceptual experience as presented as a way of Art, rationality and perception. Rationality seeks truth, perception seeks virtue and Art seeks beauty. Rationality, perception and Art are the foundation of literature.

Although the definition of Literature is a debated terrain, the importance of Literature cannot be over-emphasized especially in this period of ecological challenges. Literature has the advantage

of lasting longer and of treating issues with more perceptiveness, more balance, and more inspiration. Today, we understand more about the politics of ancient eras in Literature than we do from the history books. Literature has a way of going to the heart of issues of showing us our shared humanity, of reducing real life situation and people to ordinary situations and characters in a book. Considering the current ecological and environmental crisis, Literature can play a major role in raising the consciousness of man in understanding his position in the globe and his responsibility towards the environment. In paying attention to literary poetics, ecological commentary can emerge and take effect. How we represent the world to a large extent informs how we live in it – either responsive or not to our ecological place. Thus in the process, Literature can effect a more environmentally- conscious position. In reinstating this fact, Rueckert (1996: 107), advocates for the application of Ecology and its concepts to Literature "because Ecology has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world". Nature and Literature have always shared a close relationship as demonstrated in the works and practices of pre-classical Greeks, the Romantics, African traditional practices as well as the works of poets and other writers down the ages in almost every culture of the world. Many works of fiction and poetry manifest ecological awareness which indicates a deep sense of engagement as well as an overwhelming connection with Nature.

What does recent African literature have to say about our ecological situation and the environment of 'crisis' or 'risk' which we are currently faced with? If indeed we are living in times of survival where man's practices destroy not only the ecological balance but stand the risk of his own annihilation; how is African literature responding? Amongst some critics of late, African literary fiction has been pointedly accused of failing to respond to the conditions on ground in spite of the pressing environmental concerns. This is ironic because it is on record that

Africa and other third world nations are at the receiving ends of the current global environmental challenges due to its population and meager resources. William Slaymaker in the article, "Ecoing the Other(s): the Call of Global Green and Black African Responses" argues that much of African writings especially those which analyze the extra-ordinary mega fauna and flora do not genuinely qualify as ecological literature as Buell will define it. Other critics like Byron and Santangelo accuse Slaymaker of using an Anglo-American ecocritical framework to judge African writers.

However, a close study of African literature will reveal that the subject, Ecology, is not new to Africa. This is because African culture as well as all other cultures that fall within the realm of the 'Other' is essentially ecological in nature. African culture is spiritually and materially integrated with the landscape. It thrives on traditional ecological knowledge. Traditional ecological knowledge in Berkes (1993: 12) refers to, "The knowledge, practice and belief concerning the relationship of living beings to one another and to the physical environment, which is held by peoples in relatively non-technological societies with a direct dependence upon local resources". All cultural groups and human societies often preserve their identities through a collection of oral traditions. Dylan (2010) argues that people exist not only in geophysical places but also intellectual, ideological and intuitive systems of understanding and inherited knots of meaning. In other words, humans fit their activities, beliefs, thoughts and language to specific geographic locations. In Africa, these indigenous knowledge systems existed in the oral form and were passed from mouth to mouth across centuries in the form of stories, myths, songs, proverbs, riddles, rituals etc. Traditional ecological knowledge contained in various oral traditions play an important role through which ecological systems are sustained. It is through oral traditions that knowledge and practices concerning Nature are learned and by

extension, people gain the complex understanding of how their lives are linked to the broader ecological cycles.

These oral traditions contribute to a large extent in the formation of African literature as it is known today. African literature as it is known today began less than a century ago. From the onset, literary writing in Africa has been an engaging activity which sought to interpret events since her encounter with foreign elements. In the process, a lot of writers conveyed the oral tradition into the written; thus there is the combination of oral traditions with the European narrative form. A close scrutiny of most African works will reveal that African literature from the onset has placed much emphasis on the displacement of African people, their philosophy and culture by the colonialists, and the subsequent events that were to occur. Consequently, most African works according to Vital (2008: 1), "can be read ecocritically because ecocriticism values an ethic of place but most Africans have been displaced". As a result, the process of tracking ecological ideas in African works needs to be rooted in African region, African social life as well as its natural environment.

Many literary works show that African culture is deeply rooted in Nature. Some common ecological themes include: seeing the ownership, allocation and control of land as belonging to the spiritual realm, transmitting a view of plants, animals and other elements of Nature as being animate and alive with unique characters and preferences. Others include the transmission of ecological knowledge of plants and animals through proverbs, riddles and songs. Examples abound in all literary genres. For instance Achebe's use of proverbs which passes ecological knowledge across, Ngugi's explicit description of the Gikuyu landscape, and many other literary works found in Africa. Even the absence of some of these features in recent writings in Africa is considered a tacit statement on the degradation of the ecology/environment.

The presentation of slums in literary works as well as other features of urbanization is a product of colonialism which has led to the weakening of old traditional values of feelings such as fatherhood, motherhood, love, family, kinship as well as ecological ties.

This study however lays emphasis on drama genre as one of the outlets that promote a proto-ecological agenda. This is because drama genre as a whole has socio-historical roots buried deep in Nature as a result of humanity's attempt to discover its identity as housed within the ecological world. The beginnings of African drama for instance reveals social and political practices borne out of rituals and a quest for understanding the natural and metaphysical order of things. People were engaged with Nature and they involved metaphysical elements of Nature in interpreting phenomena that were not understood. The result is the constant engagement with Nature in virtually all aspects of African cultural activities like, festivals, naming ceremonies, burials, etc. These activities are considered to have dramatic elements and are implicated in the origins of modern African drama. In stressing the importance of drama genre as a tool to heighten ecological understanding, David Wright in an article titled "The Pattern That Connects: Drama as a Vehicle for Ecological Understanding" refers to the link between ecology and drama as that which lies in the ways in which both ecological knowledge and drama draw on an applied appreciation of relationships or connections. Furthermore, the author states that:

> Drama processes actually construct relationships. These are often thought of as person to person relationships, but they are also relationships to groups or communities; to sensed experiences; to places, spaces or settings; to other human lives; and to social and personal experiences. These relationships do not stand in isolation; they are interwoven…. Drama is life constructed with learning (pg 3)

Thus the relationship between drama and ecology lies in the qualities and interlinking of relationships. Soyinka's plays for instance, highlights man's relationship with Nature and the consequences of redefining such relationship which has led to the current ecological crisis. His plays reveal a world gone 'awry'. Such a world of ecological damage and mess requires human restructuring of their relationship with Nature. Through his writings we get to see alternative worldviews which enable us to live in greater peace and harmony with Nature, with other beings who share the planet with us and with ourselves.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Ecological problems and its socio-economic implications are the most current issues that affect the world in general. The developments that have occurred in technology within the last few hundred years to the present time, and the scale of environmental change are unparalleled in the history of mankind. In a matter of years, humans have transformed the entire ecological system; in the process they have destroyed more than they have created. Today, the World's peace is threatened due to the unreserved exploitation of Nature. Ironically, many intellectuals especially in Africa point accusing fingers at colonialism, government ineptitude within social and political institutions which has led to: under-development, corruption, inadequate education and the like for the present ecological predicament. Although one is often inclined to think in these directions because beyond doubts, these factors are heavily implicated in today's ecological crisis, and may form overwhelming barriers to protecting the integrity of the ecology.

The main problem however lies in the change in the structural relationship between man and Nature. There is a fundamental shift in how humans relate to the World. Man (especially

modern man) now sees himself as separate from and superior to the rest of Nature rather than view himself as part of a vast system. Thus, there is a change in thought from humans as part of Nature to humans as apart from Nature. This change in the relationship between man and Nature leads to new metaphysical and ideological changes that encompass all major cultural institutions and, in essence, forms a new picture of the universe and the nature of the modern man. Thus in today's dominating industrial culture, 'Earth as home is not a self evident precept' (Dylan, 2010). Many do not realize that we are born from the earth and sustained by it throughout our lives. This change in worldview is responsible for the current ecological crisis which needs urgent solutions.

In seeking for solution to the ecological crisis, the role of Literature is grossly undermined and underutilized. Literature contains a vast repository of ecological knowledge. In fact Nature in general as well as the problems that accompanied the change in the structural relationship with Nature has always been part of the concerns of Literature. This is because Nature and Literature have always shared a close relationship as is evidenced in oral traditions and the works of poets and other writers down the ages in almost all cultures. In fact, ecological reflections can be seen in the songs and stories of many cultures. In spite of this fact, critics have not been sufficiently sensitive to ecological issues discussed in literary texts. Thus, the ecological knowledge in literary texts is commonly left out of current efforts that seek to address issues of the current ecological challenges.

This study therefore, seeks to demonstrate that Literature is a discursive outlet of not only interpreting ecological crisis but of its trouble shooting. In this light, this study looks into selected plays of Wole Soyinka to answer some metaphysical questions that border on the organic relationship between man and Nature. It also seeks to elucidate the following:

i. Soyinka's model of Man-Nature relationship, particularly in pre-colonial African worldviews as reflected in his works.

ii. The ecological lessons that can be gleaned from Soyinka's texts.

iii. The relationship between the ecological implications gleaned and the current ecological crisis.

iv. If the ecological lessons deduced can influence a sustainable environmental practice.

On the whole, this study is premised largely on the idea that the way we conceptualize Nature in many ways, determines our interaction with Nature and that Literature can play a major role in raising consciousness of man in understanding his responsibility towards Nature.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to illustrate the potential of Literature in promoting proto-ecological agenda. Literature reflects ecological issues, and these issues are left out in current efforts that seek to address issues of ecological/environmental degradation. Although the root causes of the current ecological crisis and its socio-economic implications that are witnessed today lie in how man structures his relationship with Nature, Literature can contribute to raising public ecological consciousness that can be used to address the current ecological challenges. This study will try to prove this fact from the study of selected plays of Soyinka. This thesis hopes to demonstrate that there is a link between how humans structure their relationship with Nature and how they treat Nature. To this effect therefore, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

i. To illustrate that Soyinka's conception of the African worldview as manifested in his plays is consistent with ecological principles.

ii. To apply ecocritical framework as a veritable analytical tool in reading Soyinka's plays

iii. To illustrate the fact that the current socio-economic problems faced in Africa and other parts of the world are part of the implications of the current ecological crisis which is an indication of a structural problem that lies in how man relates with the world.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

That there exist global warming, climate change and that the air we breathe contains pollutants are facts verifiable by modern science. These issues are also captured in literary texts. In fact, recent occurrences of floods, drought, earthquakes and tsunamis etc are practical results of the denigration of Nature by mankind in their interactions with Nature. Third world countries especially those found in Africa are at the receiving end due to the high level of poverty, corruption and an incredible population size. The irony of the whole situation is that many are not aware of the severity of the situation. For instance, most African literary critics have consistently dealt with issues of class, race and gender in texts but have not responded in significant ways to ecological issues in literary texts. In the same vein, not many readers are aware of the underlying values that writers ascribe to ecology in their writings. This makes the study relevant, important and timely.

On the other hand, people are not aware that the separation of man from Nature is at the root of the global ecological crisis. Consequently, the imperative of ecological awareness appears today as a basis for a sustainable present and a viable future. It is therefore the intent of this study to raise the ecological perception of people by drawing their attention to the fact that Literature

has often addressed ecological issues so that they see beyond the socio-economic, political and gender based themes that many critics have tended to give prominence to in any literary discourse. It is the hope that, ecological knowledge gathered from literary texts in this study will contribute to increasing the public environmental consciousness that will eventually lead to a change in the attitude of man towards Nature.

SCOPE OF STUDY

The recent greening in African literary studies cuts across all genres of Literature. However, this study will restrict itself to the drama genre only: Soyinka's plays specifically. Secondly, Soyinka's work can be read for so many things, but the scope of this work will be to track ecological/environmental ideas in his works, for Soyinka's argument about humans and non-humans are of universal relevance and remains relevant decades after.

Soyinka has a lot of literary texts to his credit but for the scope of this work, *A Dance of the Forest* and *The Beatification of an Area Boy* will be analyzed. The two plays are representatives of different generations. The former underscores what man's relationship with Nature should be and the dangers of neglecting such relationships. The latter is a relatively recent play that reveals the consequences of man's disregard for Nature. This study will however make reference to one of his philosophical works which is, 'The Fourth Stage' in *Myth Literature and the African World*.

Furthermore, this work makes constant reference to the pre-industrial worldview and the modern industrial worldview. The former is representative of traditional societies and the latter represents industrial societies. The study however uses these concepts with caution because the

modern industrial worldview is an indefinite concept that goes beyond geographical and cultural boundaries. In this context, the modern industrial society or worldview is treated as a culture or world outlook that is closely associated with any or all of these: over- consumption of natural resources and energy, materialism, industrialism, a high level of mechanization and urbanization etc. Traditional or pre-industrial societies on the other hand, are associated with low technology, localized production of food and commodities and strict adherence to spiritual and ecological values.

Ecological concerns are global concerns. No society is totally exempted from the threats and dangers which the ecological crisis poses to humanity and the entire planet. It is on this note that the texts that will be analyzed in this study will be treated as representatives of the African context in general even though they have their settings within a particular geographical region in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to find the root cause of the current ecological crisis through ideas that can be tapped in Literature. It seeks to emphasize the fact that there is a connection between Literature and Ecology. This study thus places the ecology at the centre of its analysis. This is so because the term emphasizes interrelations and mutually dependent interactions. The study of Literature reveals that it contains awareness that is philosophical and rich in ecological knowledge.

The study also uses the methodological approach derived from deductive research method; a procedure that progresses from the general to the specific. According to Burney (2008), deductive research tends to proceed from theory to data. The emphasis in this type of

research will be on the deduction of ideas or facts from a new theory in the hope that it provides a better or more coherent framework than the theories that precede it. It is a 'waterfall' kind of research and conclusion follows logically from the available facts.

This study works from the point of view that Literature has often implied an awareness of ecological issues. The study further narrows this belief to tracking key belief held by Soyinka in his theories, and how such beliefs echo ecological principles. Ecology in this context is believed to offer significant metaphors for thinking through the interrelations and interactions between Man and Nature. Furthermore, understanding ecology enables one to understand how Man and Nature and the natural processes are mutually supportive and interrelated. This study thrives on the premise that Soyinka's literary works reveal such processes, as most of his works are rife with the representations of Nature of which several ecological lessons can be deduced.

Ecocriticism, a relatively recent discourse that connects literary criticism and theory with ecological issues will also provide a theoretical tool for this endeavour. The current ecological crisis reveals the human impact on the environment as well as on ecological species. These problems have often been reflected in Literature which in itself is a cultural product of man and which can serve as a vehicle in which cultural inference can be affirmed, questioned or even rejected. As a result of man's cultural values, the environment and all it entails (the populations of plants, animals and their organic and inorganic surroundings) have been endangered.

Ecocriticism insists upon a connection between Literature and the natural world. It sees ecological crisis as a result of a cultural hierarchy that privileges human centred values above earth centred ones. It does this by tracing metaphors ascribed to Nature in literary works and in the process suggests the limits of Nature and Culture. Ecocriticism focuses not just on trees, rivers, forest etc, it also focuses on human settings that have been altered by humans and their

culture. Thus making readers conscious of their shortcomings and raising the possibility of a change in attitude. The analysis of texts in this study will be based on Buell's theoretical criteria of evaluating texts for environmental orientation.

There are however aspects of Heidegger's critique of technology in this study because there are indeed similarities between Heidegger's thoughts and the thoughts shared by many contemporary environmentalists. Technology itself is one of the cultural activities of man that have affected Nature and is in turn affected by Nature. A study of Heidegger will reveal the complexities of Man-Nature relationship. The sense of separation from Nature has allowed humans to create and use technology designed to make life easier for man without considering its destructive impact on man and other species. Heidegger's argument on technology is germane because he offers an influential critique of technology and its domination of Nature. A study of Heidegger will reveal the complexities of the Man-Nature relationship.

Ecological crisis is a contemporary issue, so this study got its information from: news reports, online articles, online journals, e-books, and other texts which are documented. The study is also guided by the philosophy of Soyinka and Heidegger, particularly the aspects that concern ecology.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

ECOCRITICISM

Humanity's mode of living at the expense of Nature is failing. A primary reason is that man has placed himself above Nature. The earth, its ecosystem and their supporting organic/inorganic parts are seen as mere provisioners valued only when they serve human needs and wants. This problem needs a courageous change in attitudes and activities. There have been

various diagnoses and prescriptions for healing the Man-Nature relationships as found in the various movements that have developed over time. One of such movements is ecocriticism.

Ecocriticism is a field of literary inquiry that investigates human attitudes towards the environment as expressed in literary works. It is based on the premise that literature both reflects and helps to shape human responses to the natural environment. According to Hutchings (2007:1),

> By studying the representation of the physical world in literary texts and in social contexts of their production, ecocriticism attempts to account for attitudes and practices that have contributed to modern day ecological problems while at the same time investigating alternative modes of though and behaviour, including sustainable practices that would respect the perceived rights or values associated with non human creatures and processes.

Ecocriticism creates the awareness of the overwhelming effects of human activities on ecology. The word is said to have appeared first in Rueckert's essay, 'Literature and Ecology; An Experiment in Ecocriticism' but became popular in the 1990's with the establishment of academic associations and journals (ASLE and ISLE respectively) as well as the publication of books on Ecocriticism. The term has had various definitions. Glotfelty (1996: xviii) defines it as, "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment". Buell (2005:30) on the other hand, defines it as, "the exploration of the relationship between literature and the physical environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis". Coupe's (2000: 302) refers to ecocriticism as, "A branch of green studies that considers the relationship

between human and non-human life as represented in literary texts and which theorizes about the place of literature in the struggle against environmental destruction".

The common factor in spite of the various definitions is that ecocriticism examines the moral implications of man's relationship with Nature, in order to shed more light on such relationships, with the ultimate aim of saving the environment from further deterioration.

Although the 1990's marked the formal inception of the field of ecocriticism, it must however be noted that the concern for the state of Nature and fear of further depreciation as well as the concern for the future of mankind did not start with the Ecocritics. The Romantics in the late 18th century and the early 19th century showed a great interest in Nature and how it affects the common individual. Romanticism provided much fertile ground for ecocritical theory and practice. In fact, Bate in *Romantic Ecology* **(**1991**)** refers to literature in the romantic era as "the prototypical ecocriticism". Consequently Ecocriticism can be said to be the representative of romanticism in the present century as they are both concerned with "the negotiation between humans and non-humans" Glotfelty (1996). Ecocriticism however distinguishes itself from romanticism in the sense that it takes it a step further; it introduces a level of activism by engaging "with literary, ecological, philosophical and political environmentalism" Mazel (2001). Thus ecocriticism is not only informed by ecology but generally inspired by a sense of political urgency in a bid to find solutions to the current environmental problems. In Arnold Jean's words, the main goals of ecocriticism is to identify and analyze "our own attitudes towards Nature and to engender a sense of accountability for the havoc the culture's left hand wreaks on its right hand through short-sighted technological practices". Thus through ecocriticism, important

ecological purposes that have been concealed (through technological developments) will re-emerge.

At the heart of environmental discourse are arguments that attempt to define and identify the concepts 'Nature' and 'Environment', and man's relationship to these concepts. The term 'Nature' is a complex word that has proved problematic from the beginning. Raymond Williams, as quoted in Bengona's (2010:3) article, "The Junkyard in the Jungle: Transnational and Transnatural Nature" argues that Nature is arguably "the most complex word in language". Other critics like Buell (2005) believe that the term is a "fictive or discursive construct", a "notorious semantic and metaphysical trap". Furthermore, Williams in Bengona (2010:4), believes that the difficulty in defining the term indicates that it is hardly possible to define and fully laden with human history. This indicates that the term is a slippery one that often signifies different things to different people and having meanings at different periods. It has taken assumed several meanings in the course of history and in line with historical particularity. Citing Habermas, Wilber (1996: 274) argues that,

> Human history itself is characterized by personal social and institutional development from early tribal societies to contemporary liberal democracies and humans understand nature quite differently in these epochs, with modernity having the most exploitative view of all because of its tendency to dissociate nature from mind rather than to differentiate between mind and body.

Thus there are differing values and concepts of Nature. For instance, the view of Nature before the Greek/Roman civilization was that of an enchanted world full of awe and wonder. The world around was seen as wondrous, alive and man identified with it. Man was not just an alienated

observer but a direct participant. He was a part of Nature, and this relationship gave meaning to his life.

In the course of history however, this view of Nature changed. Nature was seen as that which is located outside human society. In other words, Nature was more or less an unspoiled non-human context such as rocks, woods, jungles, mountains etc. what Everdon (1992) refers to as the mass of otherness that serves as a shroud for the planet. Some viewed Nature as wild places, muddled, repugnant and inhospitable. This view is problematic as it views Nature as something different from human environments. For the Romantics however, regions which were formerly considered as valueless became highly esteemed and took on a positive sign especially by the writers of that time. This indicates that there is a difference between the natural and cultural; as it does not consider humans and landscapes that have been immensely altered as a part of Nature. Therefore implying the nature-culture divide; this in itself is a repertoire of the human-nature division. This view of Nature is narrow in meaning as it does not include the aspects of the relation of people to Nature. In other words, it does not include man's cultural activities which influence and alter Nature in various ways. Such alterations include: raw materials which are extracted from Nature which in turn alters the original form of Nature. These substances are transformed to satisfy human needs (construction of roads, manufacturing of cars, railway tracks etc). Other forms of alterations include clear-cutting of vegetation, large scale grading etc.

For post modern literary theorists, everything is textualized; thus Nature is a construct not an independent given. Contemporary environmentalists have often criticized this notion of Nature. For the ecocritics, considering Nature as a construct may reduce Nature to an idea without a palpable referent in the world. Meanwhile humans still witness the consequences of a

polluted world; a world made unfit for man's existence on a daily basis. On the whole, the concept of Nature keeps getting in the way and cannot be summarized into a simple, unproblematic definition. Nature in this study refers to both human and non-human elements as well as the human modifications of Nature.

The arguments on the concept of Nature have had their bearings in the field of Ecocriticism. This is found in the trends and other challenges that have developed in the field over time. This is seen in the first and second wave ecocriticism. The first wave of ecocriticism was averse to literary theory because of its assumed lack of engagement with environmental/ecological issues. However, the second wave of ecocriticism stretched the concept of Nature beyond the 'natural', alone. They recognized the built environment and people as part of Nature. They also included issues of race, class, gender into their agenda and they recognize the impact all of these have on the environment and the recent environmental upheaval. This makes the second wave ecocriticism more socially oriented, as it sheds more light on the relationship between culture and the environment.

The diversity of environmental issues creates a dilemma of choosing a literary perspective that can synthesize science and literature. Consequently, what ecocriticism does is to track ecological ideas in a literary text, Opperman (2006: 2) opines that, "This new eco-theory responds to the global ecological crisis and addresses important environmental issues, specifically by examining values in literary texts with deep ecological implication". This is possible because Literature is an avenue for showcasing the Cultural inferences of life. According Capra as referred to by Opperman (2006: 8), "the world is a multidimensional world and literary texts also create a multi-dimensional world of their own". For Capra, this multi-dimensional presentation allows for a text to be ecocritically examined. However, fusing

environmental discourse with Literature should not be done at the expense of Literature. As Love (1996:238) puts it, Ecocriticism can launch a new ethic and aesthetic embracing the human and the natural but not "through undermining 'the literary, textual, performative and linguistic properties of Literature". In making a case for Literature, Opperman (2006: 3) further opines that,

> Literature should not be used as a pretext for examining the ecological issues. In other words, the task of putting literature in question in order to save nature implies a reductionist approach the eco-critical reader cannot go back into perceiving literary texts as a transparent medium that unproblematically reflects the phenomenal reality. Therefore the true concern of ecocriticism ought not to be absolute representational models but with nature gets textualized in literary texts to create an eco-literary discourse would help produce an inter-textual as well as an interactive approach between literature language and the language of nature.

Thus an ecocritical theory will focus on the literary as well as ecological and environmental concepts without privileging one over the other.

Ecocriticism therefore advocates for an 'Other' which is perceived to be unable to speak for itself by addressing the silence and marginalization of the non-human in texts so that in the end it is man and not Nature that speaks. This however, is perplexing as it seems Nature fully depends on humankind for existence. The ecocritic is aware of this and sees the non-human world as an active entity with its own rights and privileges. Bates notes in ***Song of the Earth (2000)*** that the "ecocritical project always involves speaking for its subject rather than speaking as its subject". What Benet in Opperman (2006:1) refers to as creating an image or holistic entity and then treating that image as a real entity. Ecocriticism is interested in how Nature is

reconstructed in texts so much so that one can view how Nature is either represented or subverted in a text. In doing this, Opperman (2006:5) suggests that ecocriticism draws from the existing dialogic theory, where a dialogic interaction with Nature's language would challenge the status of humans as the privileged speaking subjects; this way makes the value and metaphors used to reveal that representation of Nature easily assessable.

In tracking metaphors in literary works, ecocriticism studies the representations of Nature in texts and attempts to explain attitudes and cultural activities that have and still contribute to modern day ecological problems. In other words, it reveals the limits of Nature and culture and how they affect each other. At the same time, it suggests alternatives that are needed to sustain the environment.

For the purpose of this research, this study resorts to Lawrence Buell's characteristics of an environmentally oriented text which could also serve as analytical tools in assessing any literary piece ecocritically. These include one or any of the following.

- The non human environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history.
- The human interest is not understood to be the only interest.
- Human accountability to the environment is part of the texts ethical orientation.
- Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text.

In the end, Ecocriticism observes the values assigned to Nature in a literary text. It does this by assessing the images and words that form and shape the meaning of Nature within a text. Consequently, it assesses how writers use words to reveal the representation of Nature. In this way, it becomes easy to understand how a particular culture views and treats its natural heritage

and ultimately, an author's ecological knowledge as well. It also captures the experience of nature in a literary piece. Furthermore, there have been series of literary texts with the contextualization of ecological themes such as environmental pollution and degradation, reduction of water levels in several countries; population urbanization and its consequences, extinction of certain species, violence disease and destruction of tropical rain forest etc. These ecological themes lead to more ecologically informed criticism and analysis

HEIDEGGER'S CRITIQUE OF TECHNOLOGY

Heidegger's arguments on Nature are famous for its criticism on the prevailing attitudes towards natural environment as well as the predominant conception of Nature or the natural world. As such, he offers an influential critique of technology and its domination of Nature. It is broadly acknowledged that environmental problems are as a result of man's unlimited progress in the sciences in an attempt to improve lifestyle, and liberate one from the fetters of despair, disease and hardship. This has called for a new relationship with Nature and this is why Heidegger's critique of technology proves important.

Heidegger tenders reflections on the influence and connections between who we are, where we live, and how these bear upon man's thinking. Heidegger starts his arguments on the essence of humankind and points to the dangers of conceiving humankind in reductionist terms that disregard human's remarkable capacity for comprehending itself and other entities. For him, human beings transcend Nature. He therefore refers to 'Being' as "Dasein". "Dasein" is not just an affix in grammatical terms nor is he an animal but, he transcends all of these because of his inquisitive, interpretative and comprehensive abilities. These, he believes are the essence of "Being". Dasein or "Being in the world" is not just an existence that is inclusive in the world but

one that is also involved in the world. In the process, "Beings" by their very nature of self questioning and interpretation disclose and reveal the world which consequently has a bearing on how man observes, comprehends and perceives things. Heidegger believes that Dasein has understood and revealed the world in remarkably different ways over the years. Heidegger as referred to in Hast (2010) argues that in the course of human history, beings have 'gone through roughly six epochs: first as physis (the notion of wild nature as springing forth on its own), secondly as poesis (when things were dealt with as needing help to come forth), next is the understanding of things as finished which in turn led to the religious world. The fifth notion is the modern world in which everything was organized to stand over as objects to satisfy human desires. The final epoch which Heidegger believes is the most exploitative of all because of its dominative nature is the technological epoch or the technological understanding of being.

The world in the 20th and 21st centuries has had an overwhelming revelation through the natural sciences, and this has resulted in what Heidegger refers to as a world filled with technical relations. For Heidegger, technology goes beyond just technical. In other words, it goes beyond the layman's definition of the word, and according to him, "Technology is not equivalent with the essence of technology". Similarly, Feenburg (2005) argues that technology goes beyond machinery and devices achieved to satisfy certain ends in our live. In the age of technological domination, the dominant interpretation of Nature comes through the natural sciences as Nature has been relieved of all its meanings and it is revealed as flexible raw materials from which to use and enjoy. As a result, the relationship between man and the environment has also been affected. In the age of technical relations, humans believe that all solutions lie in technology. For instance, where Nature has run out of control, humans always seek for bigger and 'better' technical solutions in order to either tame or further manipulate Nature. This is seen in recent

switch over from the use of fossil fuels (as a result of climate change) to the use of nuclear energy in some countries; thus people only see or understand the world through technology. For Heidegger, as explained by Zimmerman (1990), the revelation that the technological era offers, has the disposition of challenging Nature to a standby like "a standing reserve". It also manipulates and alters the relationship between man and Nature.

This alteration is best understood in the notion of "things" and "devices" that Heidegger comes up with. Hasts (2010) describes "things" as closely connected to the human way of dwelling, and dwelling refers to Heidegger's notion of the four-fold existential elements of our being in the world which are: earth, sky, mortals and gods. Heidegger himself reveals the fourfold when he says,

> Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting.... The sky is the vaulting path of the sun, the course of the changing moon... the' year's season and their changes... The divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead... The mortals are the human beings.... This simple oneness of the four we call the fourfold. Mortals are in the fourfold by dwelling.

For Heidegger, in this technological era, there is a paradigm shift from the world of things to the world of devices. A "thing" is a focus, a place where work and leisure gather, where the cultural dimensions of the world open up"(Borgmann, 1984). Furthermore, Borgmann (1984) illustrates the world of things and the world of devices where he says that there is a shift from the burning stoves or fire places (things) to central heating system (devices). The former involves beings, engaged with the task of building and keeping the fire with the sequence of the seasons. However, with a device like the central heating system, aspects of the original are represented but the contextual and cultural ties to Nature are disengaged from the people. Borgmann (1984),

refers to the device as that which disburdens, but at the same time, it disengages and dissolves social, natural, cultural and historical relations. Furthermore, he says a "thing" is something that would call forth active and skilled engagement; it requires practice; whereas a device merely invites consumption. In the end, the connections in the world are replaced by a mechanism that conceals the engagement with Nature. Thus, for Heidegger, it is man's disclosure and social constructs that create Nature as something separate from man.

There is an interconnectivity that exists between the self, community and the broader ecosystem. With the construction of urban settlements and more technologies, the sense of the interconnectivity between the self and the ecological system become faulty and misleading as the delicate cycle upon which our lives depend become invisible to us. This attitude of man leads to a faulty understanding of his place in the world as it results into grave consequences which include the alienation of man from Nature as well as the creation of social classes as it enables a certain group of people over others. Other effects as given by Feenburg (2005:45) include the fact that,

> The goals of the society can no longer be specified in knowledge of some sort.... They remain purely subjective, arbitrary choices and no essences guide us. Reason now concerns only means not ends. This has led to the crisis of civilization from which there seems no escape. We can explain how to get to where we want but we do not know why we are going.

That technology has enriched human existence is undeniable. It is also undeniable that it is an expensive cost, as people constantly search for the serenity in what Hasts (2010) refers to as, 'the remaining glimpse of non-technological life'. This is found in the creation of parks and recreational centres in places.

It is however a herculean task to return back to primeval Nature. The viable options left for humanity are limited. Beings in their free will capacity can either, choose to walk in the path of enlightenment/modernism or, to live with technology but within limits that will enable respect for Nature. The former will lead to a world surrounded by what Heidegger refers to as, 'Releasement'. For Heidegger, it means an attitude 'letting things be'; an open attitude towards Nature. The ability to live with technology yet put it in the service of things that command and value life. The attitude of saying, 'yes and no' technology (in spite of all the advantages that accompany it), thus placing limits on technology and above all, the attitude of free relations to technology. This is not to antagonize technology, in the actual sense, Heidegger acknowledges the redeeming, as well as the destructive powers; but more importantly he warns against the dominating Nature of the technological understanding of beings. In the technological order of beings, objects in Nature have lost what he calls their focal value to technological value; thus trees in the forest have become just mere raw materials for furniture or paper, river channels have become dumping grounds waste products (both industrial and domestic waste), animals are only seen in their utilitarian value, Nature itself has been stripped of its values; for some, it is no longer that holistic experience which includes reverence for traditional beliefs and values rather, it has become a pastime that can be switched on and off at will. This attitude often leads to inhumane directions and use of technology.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

TRACING THE ROOTS OF THE CURRENT ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

The present reality of climate change, chronic drought, deforestation, desertification and other ecological crisis that we face is a universal one, which has brought the issue of ecology to the fore. Consequently, ecology plays a central role in the present age. This is because ecology is the study of interrelationships between living things to one another and their surrounding environment. It is based on the premise that people and the planet and all that it encloses are interdependent. The word ecology has a Greek root which suggests a dwelling common to all. According to Kolvenbach (1998:1), "Ecology is derived from the Greek word 'Oikos' which means home and 'Logos' which means study or reason". Kolvenbach opines that, the study of ecology indicates that the entire planet is like a small space-craft moving in its own enclosed space on which the crew (that is humanity), must exercise a strict management if it wants to survive. Thus the essence of ecology indicates the boundaries which the management must respect. Although ecology is mostly treated as a discipline in science, the subject contains wisdom that is universal. Elements of ecological wisdom can be seen in our diverse cultures across the world. For instance we find in the songs and stories of the pre-classical Greek, Africans and in the Romantic poetry of 18th and 19th centuries the essential sense of unity among all the inhabitants of the planet. This is typical of the pre-industrial worldview.

The basic underlying perception of reality in the pre-industrial worldview sees humankind as an integral part of the biosphere and subject to its binding laws. Among the preindustrial peoples which include ancient Africa, the immediate surroundings have remained

their sole source of sustenance. As such, the need to sustain and preserve the health and integrity of the ecological system for their survival remains paramount. For them, man belongs to the earth and not vice versa and so he should live in total harmony with his surroundings by acknowledging the presence of other creatures and showing respect for the earth. There are stories and legends which describe the earth as a living being, an entity which supports and sustains us. Within this system of thinking, people viewed themselves as intimately connected to everything around them. Human life was not separate from other forms; everything was related and everything was kin. However with the rise of modernity, such sentiments changed. Man's relationship with Nature changed since he possessed the knowledge to interfere and alter his physical environment.

Over the decades, a growing number of philosophers and scientists have been turning their attention to ecological/environmental concerns, offering new perspectives on the nature of the ecological crisis and increasingly, philosophers have argued that the roots of the current ecological problems concern our basic perception of reality which leads to a conceptual split between humans and Nature. In other words, our basic metaphysical beliefs about the world affect our treatment of the world. According to Griffin (1995), the prevailing habit of the human mind over the years has been "to consider human existence and above all, human consciousness and spirit as independent from and above Nature". Thus, a paradigm shifts from the notion of man as a part of Nature, to the notion of man as apart from Nature. It is a verifiable fact that human population densities and human manipulations of the physical environment have unsettled several ecological systems that were sustainable within certain significant bio-diversity. Locating the current ecological crisis within a historical context can help one to come to grips with some of the contemporary assumptions about Man-Nature relationship because history

provides a background context in which to deal with the present environmental problems. In line with this, Kant in Reiss (1991) suggests that "history reveals to us the guilt in human injustices". The injustices suffered within the society today is a result of inequality which include a subset of the larger injustice visited by man on earth's ecology. Injustices in this context refer to the degradation of Nature as a result of man's interactions with it (Nature). The result is the annihilation of several ecological species including man.

Several environmental philosophers have linked contemporary ecological problems with specific trends within Western philosophical, religious and scientific tradition; including the anthropocentrism of some world religions, the rationalistic tradition in Western philosophy and the mechanistic Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm. Indeed all of these are implicated in the World view which is responsible for the current ecological crisis.

Ontologically, scholars like Diamond (2005), Nettle and Romaine (2000) amongst others have traced the human/Nature split to the emergence of agriculture. Nettle and Romaine (2000:17) for instance assert that "Humans first began to impose a significant and different kind of impact on the environment when they made the transition from hunter gatherers to sedentary farming societies". These scholars believe that through agriculture, the world around became an avenue to be tamed for cultivation, as farmers remoulded the environment in order to boost resource base. This might not be solely responsible for the initial shift in man-Nature relationship, for although the preindustrial people practiced agriculture; it was a different kind of interaction with the environment. It showed reverence to Nature and relied on food and other resources for only their existing natural densities; what Ghandi refers to as 'our needs'. It is the agricultural relationship with the earth, which is centralized, mechanized and which borders upon

large scale production of food for profit motives that has had a profound impact upon our relationship with Nature.

Other writers like Sessions (1977), Hargrove (1989), Plumwood (1993), Merchant (1980), Capra (1982), Matthews (1991) and Dylan (2010) however trace the man-Nature split to more recent developments in human social history (as found in the enlightenment era). They trace this man-Nature bifurcation to ancient Greek philosophy, which to a large extent, is responsible (in terms of ideas) for present day Western thought. It is believed that ancient Greek philosophy took a wrong turn when dualism became dominant. Ancient Greek philosophy serves as the pivotal development of Western culture. Western culture, according to Dylan (2010) has a long legacy of dualistic thought that some trace the Man-Nature bifurcation to Greek philosophy. Plato and Aristotle are the Greek philosophers associated with the beliefs that humans are separate from the rest of the natural world. Plato is known for dualism and Aristotle is known for 'a scale of ascent" Dylan (2010). Plato separated world into two realms: the realm of ideas/transcendental/timeless forms, and the realms of appearances in Nature. The transcendental forms provided a standard for human behaviour and therefore led to the split between spirit and matter, stasis and flux, mind and body, Self and other, culture and Nature. Aristotle on the other hand developed a metaphysical approach which according to Albert Gore (1992), "emphasized particulars, where reality could be discerned through the study of concrete temporal entities not Platonic abstractions". Aristotle accepts that there exists dichotomy between spirit and matter but, at the same time ascribes greater value to those species that exhibits a greater proportion of soul or spirit, in other words, species with greater thinking capacities.

This model of domination that is premised upon the difference in rank and values was advanced by scientists that emerged later. Consequently, the past four centuries have witnessed a

scientific world which is dominated by the Newtonian- Cartesian worldview. This synthesis of thought is based on the works of scientists like Newton, Descartes, Bacon, amongst others. Descartes for instance advanced the dualism arguments with his famous aphorism 'res cognitions' and 'res extensa' (a thinking human and the extended thing), thus separating mind from matter. Newtonian physics on the other hand viewed the universe as a machine. Its core metaphor is embedded in mechanistic explanation. In his system, the universe consists of solid matter and is made up of atoms, which is said to be the building block of the universe. The cumulative impact of Newton's and Descartes' ideas have had a profound impact on how we have come to view the natural World as their ideas have continued to influence upon modern science and thinking .Capra (1983:60) gives us an idea of its scope:

> To Descartes the material universe was a machine and nothing but a machine. There was no purpose, life, or spirituality in matter. Nature worked according to mechanical laws, and everything in the mechanical world could be explained in terms of the arrangement and movements of its parts. The mechanical picture of nature became the dominant paradigm in science in the period following Descartes... the whole elaboration of mechanistic science in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including Newton's grand synthesis, was but the development of the Cartesian idea. Descartes gave scientific thought its general framework-the view of nature as a perfect machine governed by exact mathematical laws.

This dualistic argument advanced by Newtonian-Cartesian worldview, and further improved upon by other scientists, is believed to have offered the natural sciences a much needed conceptual framework and to have ushered in the modern era through the scientific revolution, as

it separated reality between spirit and matter. Consequently Nature ceased to be viewed as an organism but a machine.

The actions of scientists at the time also attracted proportional reactions from the literary world. Prophetic voices like that of William Blake and other writers associated with the Romantic movement could see the far reaching implications of the actions of those in the scientific circles. Blake for instance directs his criticism at Newton when he says:

> Now I a fourfold vision see
> And a fourfold vision is given to me
> Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
> And threefold in soft Beaulah's night
> And twofold Always may God us keep
> From single vision and Newton's sleep
> (William Blake in Schorer 1946:5)

In Blake's perspective, Newton's single vision would partition the natural world into fragments. According to Sullivan (1999: 65), 'sleep' in this context "connoted the hypnotic character that this fragmentation would have on his contemporary as well as on posterity". This type of criticism and others that were to follow by the romantics were not strong enough to stop the powerful worldview that Newton and Descartes initiated. In fact the ideas premised on the fragmentation of Nature to a large extent, impinged upon the individual, a pervasive belief of man's separation from Nature. Through the lens of Newtonian-Cartesian science, the entire physical world became demarcated into discrete objects. Consequently, the world took on a new metaphoric meaning of the world as machine. This leads to the belief that Nature is inanimate and can be controlled in other words, the loss of a cosmological sense. William Yeats in the poem, "The Second Coming" illustrates the loss of cosmological sense when he says,

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
mere anarchy is loosed upon the world

These lines illustrate the culture of disenchantment which is sustained by conceiving the humans in terms of rationality, freedom and superiority over Nature.

The shift in notions of the universe as "organic, living and spiritual" to the world as machines has had a profound influence upon the attitudes of humans towards the natural environment. First it leads to a highly individualist sense of Self and then to a materialist outlook. This is because he scientific paradigm (unlike the old beliefs that emphasized the unity and interdependence of all life forms) advocates the separateness of man from Nature; the fact that we stand apart or outside the rest of creation and superior to Nature. This division of the world into discrete units based on ranks gives rise to an independent 'Self. This sense of 'Self' is highly eccentric in nature and it is characterized by a perception of the Self as a personal identity and also as a dualistic separation of its (the Self) disconnection from Nature. According to Bradshaw (2007:82), "the sense of Self is narrowly delineated and is consistent with a worldview that is characteristically objective and atomistic". Thus the 'Self views anything outside it as an 'Other'. This 'Self is also capable of influencing and acting upon the 'Other'. This leads to the disappearance of reverence and humility towards Nature. For Plumwood (1992), the dualism of Self/Other leads to a set of interrelated binary oppositions that privileges one over the other. Such oppositions include: Culture/Nature, Man/Woman, Reason/Nature, Black/White, Mind/Body etc. The result of this is the ecological crisis prevalent today. Furthermore, Jean Craige (1988) argues that, "Platonic dualism and Aristotelian hierarchy has also made the exploitation of people within the realm of the 'Other' (like women, non-white races,

technologically unsophisticated societies, and the earth) by those high on the ladder appear natural.

Consequently, scientific knowledge which was made popular in modern Europe and which made the mechanistic view of the world a dominant metaphor, as well as intensified the Man-Nature dualism, has had profound consequences on our thinking and actions regarding the natural world. It is believed to have given humankind an unparalleled opportunity to mediate in the natural world as well as "less sophisticated societies" like Africa. In fact, the sense of Self is evident in man's everyday activities. For instance, in the midst of debates on how to curb activities that contribute to climate change, nations in the 'Third World' are thinking of deregulating their oil sector; thus creating an avenue for the continuous despoliation of Nature.

Materialistic outlook is another effect of the separation of 'Self' from Nature. Ecophilosophers have often argued that the modern industrial thoughts often lead people away from spiritualism towards materialism. Bradshaw (2007) sees materialism in the philosophical sense as the view that the only things that can be truly said to exist are material things. The materialist outlook believes that reality comprises fundamentally of only physical objects. Consequently, things that appear immaterial, non physical or intangible are relegated to the background or not even recognized at all. This attitude towards Nature became even more profound in the nineteenth century as can be seen in religious as well as in the literary writings of the time. Wordsworth for instance wrote at the beginning of the industrial revolution on the effects of materialism:

> This world is too much with us, late and soon
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
> Little did we see in Nature that is ours;
> We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon;

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not — Great God!

Modern materialistic culture stimulates consumption and so continually increases new artificial needs which in turn have a considerable effect on how we order our lives. On the whole, the overall implication of excessive materialism especially when it is combined with a strong sense of 'Self' over 'Other' include: overconsumption, resource depletion, land degradation and a selfish drive towards the use and acquisition of material things. This is evident in the scramble for the domination of other societies for mercantile interest.

So far, this study has tried to situate the origin of the problem within a cultural and historical context from the European framework. The study starts from the European world because the dominant cultures over the years have spread from one part of the world to the others. Right from the 19th century, the world started recording great social changes as well as remarkable technological progress that have continued to challenge the religious and social basis to this day. Wilber (1996:69) gives us an idea of what this social change is all about when he says:

> The rise of modernity - and by 'modernity' I mean specifically the rational industrial world view, and roughly the Enlightenment in general- served many useful and extraordinary purposes. We might mention: the rise of democracy; the banishing of slavery; the emergence of liberal feminism; the differentiation of art and science and morality; the widespread emergence of empirical sciences, including the systems sciences and ecological sciences, an increase in average life span of almost three decades the

> introduction of relativity and perspectivism in arts and morals and science; the move from ethnocentric to world centric; and in general the undoing of dominator social hierarchies in numerous and significant ways.

Although these changes became prominent from the l9 century, the roots go back into the voyages of discovery in the late 15th century which resulted in slavery, colonialism and imperialism respectively. These interrelated developments have serious after-effects. For instance colonialism which is the systemic subjection of colonized people served as a bridge with which a dominant culture, knowledge and framework was transported into indigenous populations. Subsequently, the West has continued to export its ideals and practices to the rest of the World with the promise of prosperity to other nations and a corresponding growth of the modern industrial worldview. The emergence of industrialism and the subsequent industrial revolution over two centuries ago led to a dramatic change in the ethics of land use and resource consumption and the outline for the modern high consumptive society was set in motion. Subsequently, man has progressively increased his material and energy consumption. This shift in the nature of our interaction with the ecology/environment also affects our perspective and understanding of our relationship with Nature. To tame, domesticate, civilize and unravel the secrets of Nature became the mission of the Industrial revolution.

It is important to recognize the value of ecology in Africa. In fact the African culture is essentially ecological in nature as most cultural groups have within them a range of environmental values and ethics, and a range of practices shaped by the day-to-day contingencies, as well as their worldview and ethics. This fact is evident in the prolific body of folklore or oral arts found in Africa which have themes that portray a healthy man-Nature

relationship. In oral narratives across Africa, a great deal of ecological lessons is learned. Sometimes we find stories where words of wisdom are put into the mouths of non-human characters as found in several trickster stories, other times, we see humans and animals co-mingle. Beside these, most African oral arts help students to gain some kind of ecological awareness. A good example is seen in Lawino's "Graceful Giraffe Cannot Become a Monkey," where the poet refers to a number of animals that are common in Africa:

Listen,
Ostrich plumes differ
From chicken feathers,
A monkey□s tail
Is different from that of the giraffe,
The crocodile□s skin
Is not like the guinea fowl□s,
And hippo is naked, and hairless (p□Bitek 51)
…
No leopard
Would change into a hyena,
And the crested crane
Would hate to be changed
Into the bold-headed,
Dung-eating vulture,
The long-necked and graceful
Giraffe
Cannot become a monkey
Let no one
Uproot the pumpkin (p□Bitek 56).

Other pieces of evidence on the ecological nature of African culture abound in the written literary tradition. Early writings in Africa reveal the indigenous perspective of life before the

advent of colonialism as an organic whole that thrived on the belief that Nature is a sacred source whose balance needed to be respected. People lived in perfect harmony with the landscape. For instance in Achebe's **Things Fall Apart** (1958), we see how the lives of the characters are drawn into Nature to form a harmonic whole; from the alternation of the seasons, to storytelling on moon-lit nights, to the observation of the week of peace amongst others. We see a replication of this human-Nature relationship in the works of other African writers like: Gabriel Okara, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Nwapa Florence, Osundare Niyi and many others. This indigenous perspective gradually thinned out with colonialism and was replaced by Western beliefs that Nature needs to be tamed and domesticated. The rich oral histories and traditions which were held in high esteem and which focused on meanings and connection were replaced by an essentially Western world view. For instance the art of storytelling was replaced by paper stories and the media. Through this process, the perception of one dominant race came to define valid knowledge and consequently rejecting the previously accepted and established way of knowing. In other words the cultural, social and linguistic diversity of the 'Other' were taken for granted and viewed as what Foucault (1980) refers to as beneath the required level of scientificity.

It is important to note that early European constructions of the indigenous people are also informed by the conceptualizations of the non-humans. The major shift, as regards the conception of Nature between the pre-modern and modern world has had profound consequences on the thinking and actions of man. It also inspires the way societies in the West interrelate with other humans especially those that fall outside their cultural or national group. The West possessed a pre-existing cultural lens through which Africans were viewed. From their earliest contact with African people, Europeans posited that the closeness of the Africans to Nature meant distance from God. African culture was regarded as retrograde for having their belief

embedded in mythic structures. Their mythic interpretations were viewed as primitive. As such, it established the Western scientific thoughts as superior to the thoughts of the existing cultures. Africans were disparaged and reduced to a stereotypic image of the primitive, barbaric and the despicable. This is evident in early European narratives like that of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and others. The cultural clash therefore, that accompanied colonialism in Africa originates from the relations with the West, which are strongly influenced by the conceptualizations of the 'Other'. This is also strongly influenced by the ideas about the non-human World.

Colonialism in itself has several implications. One of such implications is cultural loss by the indigenes of a society. Nigeria or modern Nigerian state is the direct creation of European power politics and culture. However, the culture introduced by Europeans was not in the interests of the Nigerian people but in the mercantile interest of the West. In the process, several legacies were introduced and one of such legacies is the English language. The domination of language on a diverse group of people cannot be underestimated. Some linguists have argued that language is as responsible for the shaping of a culture as it is for transmitting it. According to Gill (1997:39)

> There is a fundamental sense in which language may be said to be the most crucial aspect of any culture, since it is by means of speech that a people acculturate children into the community. Not only are the traditions and practices of a given group transmitted by storytelling and oral instructions, but it is by being drawn into speech through conversations, games, songs and the likes that infants actually becoming members not only of their own society but of the human race in general. Language is not an optional

> aspect of what we know as human culture; it is the key vehicle and focal lens through which it must be understood.

Language in itself goes beyond mere words; it goes beyond just an instrument of communication. It is an avenue to interpret and make sense of the world around us. According to Soyinka (2006:10)

> The spoken language is among the foremost of humanity's primary archives which is one of the reasons why sitting conquerors often attempt to eradicate the language of subjugated peoples and compel them to adopt that of the invader or dominant entity…. Language is not however, simply a tool of insurgency or even plain defiance of identity assertion but a repository of knowledge, mores, history and culture, of a people's world view and philosophy…

Similarly, Vaden (2004) refers to language as "precommunicative and a subjective" meaning that, it cannot be separated from its context or background, or indeed from the way of life, land and therefore the people that make it meaningful and intelligible". Thus the moment a language was enforced on the African populace, a barrier gradually began to develop between the people and their way of doing things, of their communal, social and collective experiences. This is what the character, Obierika in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) means when he says, the whites have "put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (160). Expectedly, the bulk of early African fiction, regardless of genre has always been anchored upon the displacement of her people by the colonialists and the subsequent events that were to occur.

The adoption of a new language as an official language also implied the adoption of a new culture (for really, adopting the Western culture also signified the adoption of Western understanding of humans and Nature); thus a new culture of materialism, capitalism, amongst

others emerged. The adoption of new cultures and values leads to the assumption of the present as the starting point without a reference to the past. African culture was forsaken in order to champion some foreign course and in the process, Africans learnt to comprehend the world through foreign language and concepts. This has severe implications for, regarding only the present as relevant, leads to the error of regarding the heritage of our indigenous past as inferior. Such an error leads to the indiscriminate importation of foreign culture; thus there has been lack of thought on the part of Africans so much so that there is the assumption that for anything to succeed, it has to be patterned in the same manner as obtained in the West.

Consequently, the last five to six decades have seen people moving from living in harmony with the land to living in cities and dispossessed from a direct relationship with the land. Due to symptoms of urbanization spiritual values have been replaced with materialism and disconnection from the land leading to massive poverty and human displacement. This, according to Regio (1982: 2) has led to "life in turmoil, life out of balance, life in disintegration; a state of life that calls for another way of living". Technological and economic advancement that mimic the European model of progress and which is fashioned at satisfying human wants rather than needs have led to constant disintegration of people from the world of 'things' to the world of 'devices'. This has a multiplier effect as it has led to several social problems which is captured in Osundare's *The Eye Of the Earth* (1986:xvi) when he says,

> Waters are dying, forests are falling. A desert epidemic
> stalks a world where the rich and ruthless squander earth's wealth
> on the invention of increasingly accomplished weapons of death,
> while millions of people perish in daily from avoidable hunger.

This disintegration also affects the ecological system. Each human culture of the past developed a unique language entrenched aesthetically within a specific geographic region and ecosystem; such ecological systems based on cultural diversity fostered sustainable living in different parts of the earth. Today, the languages of colonized people which were hitherto deeply rooted in unique ecological systems are dying out in the process of homogenizing the world and consequently ecological wisdom which is embedded in diverse cultures is ignored.

These changes and the effects of blind imitation of European culture which Maitama Sule refers to as 'socio-cultural hypnosis' are often reflected in African writings and even among cultural scholars. Several early African writers in trying to correct the notion of socio- cultural hypnosis have tried to appropriate the techniques and methods from traditional oral literature. These writers have tried to remind readers that the African past has its own philosophical views and contained various provisions for respecting fellow humans, the natural environment and wild life in the form of sanctions contained in various folktales and taboos.

Today Africa is witnessing a series of avoidable problems among which are social disorder and instability as well as ecological/environmental problems as a result of the loss of values, wisdom and traditional ethics. In line with this fact, Maitama Sule asserts that, "a people who abandon its history, its tradition and culture will forever remain artificial and accordingly incapable of attaining peace and progress". Thus for Africa to resolve these ecological problems and all its accoutrements, there is the need to trace the root of the problems by looking into ecological wisdoms which is often transmitted in the myths, legends and narratives of the people. This is because Nature is often influenced by the beliefs and activities of humans.

SOYINKA'S PHILOSOPHY AND ECOLOGY

The success of the development of any geographical region rests on the strength of its knowledge framework which forms the basis of its ethical, moral and cultural character. In Africa these knowledge frameworks existed in oral forms and were passed from mouth to mouth across centuries, in the form of stories, myths, legends, songs and the like. Unfortunately, the stories of non-western people have often been reduced to bizarre narratives which in Foucault's words are believed to be beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. Thus, colonialists in Africa were quick to dismiss off African cosmological and cosmogonic narratives and replaced it with their own narratives. Consequently, Africans are confronted with a history which begins with the vilification of Africa. It is within this confine that the written African literature was born. From the onset, African literature has been characterized by the imaginative reconstruction of the continent. Colonialism has subjected the African to a system of representation that seeks to assert his right against a system of representation that estranged him from his identity; thus resorting to the use of stories. Said (1993) argues that, "Stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world, they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their history". Stories from Africa have therefore been about promoting social, political and moral values that are vital to the survival of the society. This course has churned out writers that have created indelible landmarks in the literary world, not only in Africa but around the world. One of such writers is Wole Soyinka.

Soyinka is a contemporary Nigerian playwright, whose writings are dedicated to aid the cultural and political progress of his nation. His art stems from his indigenous roots, but it is also versatile as well, (as his works reach out to the whole world). He is a poet, an essayist, a novelist,

but he is most globally recognized as a dramatist, for his creativity and artistry, flourish in his plays. Soyinka stands as an authentic voice that has employed various tools to create a discourse through which he represents his philosophy for the progress of his nation. Furthermore, he is a writer who believes that the principal function of Art is "the visionary reconstruction of the past for the purpose of a social direction". He has an exceptional style of writing and he is highly experimental as found in the unique form, technique and subject matter of his works. Jeyifo (2004:8) refers to his works as having the characteristics of pushing radically beyond the existing boundaries of artistic practice and also beyond the scope of readers and audiences' expectations. Furthermore, Jeyifo (2004:10) refers to Soyinka's use of images as a "self that is mimetically unpresentable precisely because its representation or rather its representability is beyond the horizon of presently available or formalized linguistic artistic, generic and ideological frames". Ironically, Soyinka's uniqueness and brilliant creativity has fetched him more resistance, suspicion and hostilities. It has also created a polemic amongst writers and critics; those who are cautious of him and those who are avid supporters. While some critics of Soyinka often stress upon the issue of linguistic difficulty, others argue that he writes with a gender bias. In fact, Soyinka unarguably, is one of the most controversial and misunderstood writers in Africa when it comes to the use of language and the designation of characters in his creative works. He has been accused from different quarters of alienating most of his readers and even people of the intelligentsia.

Evaluating Soyinka's works on the basis of language or gender indicates that there is indeed a lacuna in the communication and comprehension of his ideas, which are deeply entrenched in African tradition. The depth of philosophical meanings in his work goes beyond his use of language or presentation of gender. Little attention is paid to the main thrust of his

works which also forms the bedrock of his philosophy: the structural relationship between man and Nature. A deep reading of his plays will reveal that there is this deep concern for man, Nature, man's relationship with Nature, and ultimately, the moral implication of man's interaction with Nature. Ogunba (1975) refers to Soyinka's works as that which deals 'with matters of great consequence for the life and health of his community; both spiritual and political'. For Soyinka, as demonstrated in most of his writings, the roots of African national problems lie in the problem of complication in structure; in this case, the structural ties that exist between man and Nature. These problems are accentuated by the effects of colonialism which put machineries in place to banish a people's repository of history, in order to assimilate such societies into a supposedly superior, modernistic, and progressive world. In trying to assert the African cultural heritage, Soyinka employs more traditional and unique methods in telling his stories. His, is a unique theoretical approach to the issue of representation which has influenced his aesthetic choices and production. Unlike other popular approaches that aimed at restoring pride and confidence to the African identity, Soyinka's treatise attempts to present culture and identity that is authentically African and independent of traits from western hegemony.

Basically the main stream of Soyinka's philosophy which forms the background of most of his plays is his theory of "self apprehension" which advocates that creative cultural representation has to start from a profound knowledge of one's culture. For Soyinka in *Forget the Past and Forfeit the Present* (2006)**,** the purpose of existence is enquiry and enquiry encompasses past, present and future; for "man exists in a comprehensive world of myth, history and mores" p10. An appreciation of such profound knowledge leads to the understanding of the meaning of existence and the existence of other things in the world and above all a harmonious existence between the two. As a social visionary, Soyinka's plays offers readers and the world in

general the possibility of transformation and liberation from injustice through revising our adopted practices. In doing this, he starts with the structural relationship between the components of Nature. According to Al-Tuwaijri (2009:178)

> Soyinka's philosophy remaps the whole world as home breaking down the Nature-Culture and human-nonhuman dichotomies. His writings resonate with echoes of myth and tradition from which to draw sublimity and power to unify the ethics of exploitation and commodification and promote an ethic of subsistence and wholeness

A study of Soyinka's works reveals a model of Nature as awesome, sacred, vibrant and animate. Soyinka reveals Nature as a powerful and unpredictable force that must be respected. This is not the case in the modern world where Nature is separated from 'Self' and for the most part is viewed and treated as passive, inanimate, and without a value of its own hence the manipulation and abuse of Nature without considering the consequences.

Soyinka therefore calls people's attention to the ecological self, the outer self and the world of organic unity where the cosmic balance is maintained so as to attain human liberty. The ecological self is defined as "... the sum of a person's perceptions and evaluations concerning Nature and environment and their relevance for everyday contexts" (Linneweber:2003). Similarly, Gandhi in Naess (1987) sees the ecological self as the culmination of a process of personal maturation which begins with a recognition of the personal self during childhood and proceeds to the realisation of the social self, in terms of being a member of the human society and finally to an ecological self, were the Self locates itself as just a fragment within the entirety of the living world. Thus ecological self is a process of identification, a process of how humans situate or understand themselves in relation to the natural world as developed through a variety

of experiences, relationships and personal interpretations. These relationships with Nature also constitute a responsibility and a moral obligation to the natural world. This makes Soyinka a human ecologist as his philosophy is similar to the principles of ecology.

The subject Ecology is anchored upon the idea of the interconnection and interaction of everything which include humans and non-humans. Barry Commoner's first law of ecology states that, 'everything is connected to everything else'. Fromm (2004:2) captures this in his review of Love's *Practical Ecocriticism* where he states that,

> A man and woman eat food from the earth that becomes their bodies and sperm cells and eggs. A fertilized egg, fed by more plants and animals keeps dividing, turning into specialized body parts, including a brain, that are wholly derived from plants and animals (and earth, sunlight, water, air etc that generate them). The environment is coursing through the foetus, which is made of substances ingested by the mother. The foetus becomes a baby who becomes a person who is comprised of the plants and animals eaten by his parents and now eaten by him. His cells, nails, hair, skin etc are regularly sloughed off and replaced by newly made substances derived from the earth generated plants and animals to feed new parents, sperm, eggs and foetuses.

The bottom line is that there is a communal relation, a chain, a synergy amongst all elements that constitutes the earth. Hence what affects one affects the other. This idea of interconnectivity and interrelationship is best conceived in Soyinka's "The Fourth Stage" in *Myth Literature and the African World*. Soyinka's "The Fourth Stage" depicts that human actions are closely connected to the cycles of Nature. Thus, he offers an aesthetic, through which a community comprehensively relates with Nature, defines and recreates its values. Soyinka weaves the

notions of time, soul, human wellness and morality as accoutrements that are inextricably linked to environmental matters in Africa.

Time for Soyinka is a complex concept. 'It is no abstraction" and cannot be conceived of in simple 'reductionist' terms like it is done in the West. Soyinka in "The Fourth Stage" in Olaniyan and Quayson (2000:365) says.

> The Yoruba is not like European man, concerned with the purely conceptual concepts of time; they are too concretely realized in his own life, religion, sensitivity, to be mere tags for explaining the metaphysical order of his world. If we may put the same thing in fleshed out cognitions, life, present life, contains within it manifestations of the ancestral, the living and the unborn. All are vitally within the intimations and affectiveness of life, beyond mere abstract conceptualisation.

Time for Soyinka is cyclical, just as everything in Nature seems to follow a cyclical movement. This notion about the cyclical nature of life also encompasses other realms of life as seen in the rhythmic nature of seasons, of day and night, of planting and harvesting, of the waxing and waning of the moon etc. For Soyinka, the past, present and future are seen as a complex web of interrelationships which involve the divine and the humans. It is assumed that humans die and leave for the realm of the dead/spirits and can also be reincarnated (into the human form again) into the world of the living. In the same regards, Benedict Ibitokun (1995:3) also refers to the Yoruba worldview as multi-dimensional, for him.

> It is not restrained to the physical, tangible plane of existence. Besides the earth which is the measure of existence. Besides the earth which is the measure of the present and the locus of the mortals and where you and in the form of existence, dramatize our

> distinctive destinies, there are the realms of ancestors (the past), gods (the eternal), and the unborn (the future).

This conception of the notion of time is best summarized in Momaday's *The Man Made of Words* (1997) where he refers to the conception of time as, 'a dimension of timelessness' involving, 'an infinite web of interrelationships'. The indigenous people possess a circular understanding of time. Thus the world portrayed is a homogenous world where man is bound to the gods and Nature. A world with pre-given significance in which there exist an inherited responsibility of maintaining a balance with the existing cosmic forces in order to sustain unity of both man and Nature. Therefore, there is the supposition that human life is connected with the non-human components. This cyclical notion of time forms the background of most of Soyinka's plays. In fact, there is this constant co-mingling between the spiritual and the physical in most of his plays. Soyinka reflects this through the use of rituals, which is seen as a process where, man can have direct access to the gods or spirits. Harrison (1982) refers to it as a powerful social vehicle which publicly confirms social values. Furthermore, he says, "it is transcendental in that it transforms through spirit possession, the earthly to the spiritual and thus reaffirms the relationship of man to the gods" Harrison (1982). In *A Dance of the Forests* (1963), Soyinka demonstrates this fact with the dead pair (the past), humans (the present), and the half child (the future). According to Opali (2007:7),

> Soyinka recognizes man's oneness with the earth. For him the living are cyclically related to the earth. We occupy this world, a little space, but our final journey through which we gain more knowledge about life is to the earth from which we paradoxically again come back to teach our relations who are still alive. In other

> words there is a continuous circular relation between the living and the dead.

Man's relationship with Nature goes beyond just transcending from one phase to another. It is more of a bond in the Coleridgean sense, which places the responsibility of maintaining a balance with existing cosmic forces in order to sustain peace and unity; thus people are clearly embedded and obliged to participate in sustaining the cosmic order.

Current global environmental challenges make evident gaps between the problems we are generating and our ability to comprehend and address them. Numerous attempts by man to manage environmental problems often reveal man's lack of understanding and interconnectedness. In play after play, Soyinka often reveals this disconnection and he constantly reiterates that human wellness is inextricably linked to the well being of the cosmological cycle and by implication to the human self. Failure to restructure our relationship with Nature leads to tragedy. In fact, Soyinka defines tragedy as "the anguish of severance, the fragmentation of essence from self". In expounding the concept of tragedy, Soyinka introduces the fourth stage into the concept of time. It is a stage described as "the vortex of archetypes and home of the tragic spirit". It is a stage in which,

> Its dialogue is liturgy; its music takes form from man's uncomprehending immersion in this area of existence, buried wholly from rational recognition. The source of the possessed lyricist, chanting hitherto unknown mythopoeic strains whose antiphonal refrain is, however, instantly caught and thrust with all its terror and awesomeness into the night by swaying votaries, this source is residual in the numinous area of transitions. (Olaniyun and Quayson, 2000:366)

Nature in this context therefore extends beyond realm of man's comprehension: not in the western reductionist terms. The western scientific knowledge which is based on radical fragmentation, deals only with the visible world. In Ali Unal's (2000:7) words, "they follow a sensory and experimental approach and tend to accept only those conclusions resulting from their approach. Thus modern scientific world-view is quite similar to materialism". For Soyinka, Nature is far more extensive than just the physical. He demonstrates this in the poetic prologue in the play *The Road* which reads

> No sweat-beads drop beneath
> The plough-wings of the hawk.
> No beetle finds a hole between Agemo's toes

These lines indicate that there are certain things in Nature that lie beneath the grasp of man; thus the futility of Professor's search for the meaning of life and death. Asides the physical, there is also the metaphysical which forms part of the universe. All forms of beings in the universe, on whatever level are interrelated, interconnected and interdependent. Conformity with this awareness of Nature is considered the key to health and wellness. Where health or wellness in this context is not just a component in any society and or ecological system but it is an expression of development. The development of the surrounding system: the socio-economic environment, physical environment, behavioural environment, attitudes and practices particularly to sustain the well being. For Soyinka, as he reveals in most plays, humans need healthy connections with a healthy earth to survive. It is in this regards that his plays have a profound moral concern which is centred on developing an ecological self.

Soyinka's conception of the soul is essential in studying the relationship between his philosophy and ecology. His ideas about the soul explore the conceptualizations of the non human world. According to Dylan (2010:158), "whether or not constituents of the non-human

are understood as having a soul can influence the relationship between the humans and non-humans. An ensouled world is likely to gather reverential relations than a world thought to comprise nothing more than a store-house of exploitable resources". For Soyinka, the whole world lives. Soul, animate things, trees, rocks, etc and whatsoever embodies the soul are spirit beings that deserve to be treated with respect. This belief is reflected in his plays where trees have spirit beings embedded in them, as well as the skies, waters and thunder. For instance 'Say T', a character in *The Road* says,

> Dead! You think a guy of timber is dead load.... There is a hundred spirit in every guy of timber trying to do you down cause you've trapped them in, see? There is a spirit in hell for every guy of timber. You reckon a guy just goes and cuts down a guy of timber. You gorra do it proper man or you won't live to cut another log. Dead men tell no tales kid. Until that guy is sawn up and turned into a bench or table, the spirit guy is struggling inside it, and I don't fool around with him, cause if your home was cut down you sure gonna be real crazy with the who's done it. pg26

The interaction between these forces is what Soyinka refers to as, "the animist interfusion of all matter and consciousness". This view is not only peculiar to Soyinka's philosophy but can be found in other religions and cultures as well. For instance Buddhism which can be said to be an off shoot of Hinduism emphasizes Man-Nature relationship based on the concept of 'nirvana' (non violence) which preaches respect for all life forms and restrains in killing animals and destroying plants. A similar concept called 'Ahimsa' exists in Hinduism. Shinto, the ancient religion of the Japanese teaches that the natural phenomena like winds, trees, rivers and mountains are alive and have souls called 'kami'. The belief is that an interaction exists between the divine and the human, the profane and the sacred, the holy and the secular, whereas the

divine, sacred and holy have already been departmentalized amongst the various elements of the earth.

Intricately interwoven with the spatial practices of the people, Nature plays a central role in Soyinka's writing, as his philosophy, which equally informs his texts does not separate Nature from culture. In essence, Nature is intertwined with the people who inhabit it. Both the inanimate and animate in the landscape enter into a relationship. In the spirit of emphasizing the importance of a reconnection with Nature, Soyinka often juxtaposes the traditional past and the modern present. For him, knowledge of the mutual dependency between Nature and Man lies at the forefront of tradition. Thus the past can and should be re-examined in order to apply that to future understanding. In the guise of urbanization, people have changed their relationship with Nature. In a very short time, Africans have moved from an ecological identity to a technological and man-made one which is eradicating people's connections with the earth. People now live isolated lives without having encounter with Nature and even the traditional ties that promote mutual relationships with humans and non-humans. This is why in play after play, Soyinka persistently explores the contradictory relationship between the past and the present and often favours the traditional past over the present. Characters are often torn between tradition and modernity, and cultural preservation and renovation. Characters are often chosen with precision to suit his presentation of tradition. Modern life in most of his plays is often presented as frenzied, demanding, and fast paced that people are so often consumed and stressed by the hurly-burly of urban life and consequently, they hardly have time to reconnect with themselves let alone with the natural world. This lifestyle not only disconnects man from the environment but creates a state of mental disarray that can work to reinforce the disconnection from the natural world. Characters like Lakunle in *The Lion and the Jewel,* Rola in *A Dance of the Forests* and

Awuchike in *The Swamp Dwellers* view traditional values with contempt. They identify with urban values, modernity and by implication technology. On the other hand, characters like Baale, Iya Mate, Iya Agba and Mama Put stand for cultural conservation. For instance, Iya Agba and Iya Mate protectively guard their knowledge of the secrets of herbs and medicines and other secrets which is symbolic of the cultural past from the medicants because they don't find them worthy of the sacred knowledge due to the decline of values in the community. Same can be said of Iyaloja in *Death and the King's Horseman* who functions as the advocate of life in the community. She is referred to as the "Mother of the market" (146), and insofar as the market is the swirling centre of life, she is the matriarch of spirit in the community. The Praise-Singer refers to her as "Iyaloja, mother of multitudes in the teeming market of the world, how your wisdom transfigures you" (161). She is full of spiritual wisdom as she warns the Elesin of the grave consequences of not maintaining the balance in the realm of transition. Thus she acts like a matriarch who seeks a just balance within the realm of existence. This is also true of Segi in *Opera Wonyosi* and Mama put in *Beatification of an Area Boy***.** Soyinka laments the environmental damaging practices over the centuries; in essence, the cultural quest to catch up with the West has led to what he refers to as 'mind and technology', which cannot be separated from the aim of mastering the earth and creating ecological destruction. It can be deduced from Soyinka's works that, the drive to live a technological life has long term effects on the earth. Although technologies promise comfort, it contains its own contradictory impetus, because the methods used to manifest this vision destroy the conditions necessary to its realities and thus exacerbates the ecological crisis.

Soyinka's concerns on ecology have not been adequately appreciated. Slaymaker in an article, for instance directs us to the writings of Osundare and Saro Wiwa as examples of African

writers who had committed themselves to ecological activism. In his opinion, Soyinka does not share the ecological activism of the two writers mentioned above, although he has authored works that "connect his love for place and his respect for culturally important natural sites around life". This apparently is a myopic study of Soyinka and his works. Soyinka's works goes beyond just protecting environmental resources. His philosophy brings to our understanding the interconnectivity of all life forms. One may see Soyinka in several different ways: as a philosopher, as an advocate of human justice and above all as a nature lover. Such diversity is an evidence of his multipartite nature. Although the problems of ecology became popular in the late twentieth century, the roots of ecological knowledge can be traced to traditional worldviews, culture, religion and folklore. Soyinka's constant reference to the past as a model, myth, and his idea about human connectedness with Nature is so explicit and makes him a human ecologist. This is because the strength of human ecology rests in its ability to see human beings and their environment, as integrated whole and not as separate entities. Soyinka is not against the development project but against the weight of the comforts that accompany the modernist project to which people are fast becoming enslaved to. In this regards he follows the path of other thinkers like; Wordsworth, Heidegger, John Ruskin, Mathai Wangari, Mahatma Gandhi and others who are critical of industrialization and the subsequent modernity project that was to follow.

CHAPTER THREE

EARTH CONNECTIONS AND MORALITY IN SOYINKA'S *A DANCE OF THE FORESTS*

> The most important human endeavour is the striving for morality in our actions. Our inner balance and even our very existence depend on it. Only morality in our actions can give beauty and dignity to life'. Einstein.

This study is propelled by a profound moral concern. This is because humans have inflicted massive damage on the ecology on which it thrives. This is evident in the current challenges faced all over the world. These challenges characterize what many refer to as our present day global crisis. In fact, human lives have become incredibly complex and clearly, humans have not found answers to these perennial problems neither have the modern technological solutions implemented by man brought man any closer to peace, harmony, and contentment.

Modern day civilization is a formidably multi-dimensional project and more than ever, humans are in need to shape their lives consciously based on the best wisdom available. Such wisdom Soyinka proposes can be found in traditional ethics which define man's relationship with fellow beings, non-humans and the spiritual. As such, Soyinka opines for an alternative in the worldviews of man to involve the interest of the non-humans and other beings in order to achieve greater peace and harmony with Nature. In fact, this informs his definition of morality. Soyinka in the article titled, "The Fourth Stage", refers to morality as that, "which creates harmony in the cosmos" because "cosmic balance is a function of the healthy interaction of the spiritual, the human and the natural forces". Although this connection is not readily visible; it is

the acknowledgement of this connection that is morality. It is thus evident that the current environmental and ecological crisis is not solely a technological problem but a problem of values as well. And values involve the basic ethics concerning man's relationship with Nature. Even though some of these values that Soyinka proposes were created a long time ago, their insights into the human conditions are as valid and vital today as they were then. It is in this regards that Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* (1963) is littered with remarks on man's moral values, the exploitation of Nature and his views about the excesses of materialism and industrial civilization.

The play opens up with the celebration of "a gathering of the tribes". Humans ask the spirits and deities of the sacred grove to send them some of their illustrious ancestors to witness the occasion. The forest spirits however seize the opportunity to remind man of his past which was fraught with immoral acts like violence, tyranny, hypocrisy and corruption. Thus, the occasion turned out to be one of confrontations. Two restless dead people are sent instead of the expected illustrious ancestors and they are used as a bait to lure the unsuspecting humans into the heart of the forest for expiation. These characters lured into the forest are representatives of the human community who have lived their past lives in the cycle of immorality, corruption and violence. In the end, the characters are forced to confront their past crimes, assess its link with the present and its effect on the future.

Several ecological statements are made in the play. These ecological statements are part of the concerns of ecocriticism. This is because the ultimate goal of the movement is to examine the moral implication of human interactions with Nature, in the hope of preserving a diminishing resource and averting ecological and environmental disasters. Soyinka is committed to a moral ideology where one lives with a sense of meaningful connection which expands to the earth, the entire community of life including the past, present and the future generations. Furthermore,

Soyinka moves for a change in our perception of the roles of humans in the sustainability of the earth. He reveals in the play that every human action has ethical consequence and it resonates throughout the ecosystem. This is true considering Commoner's first law of ecology where everything is connected to everything else. Although Nature is self sufficient and susceptible to change, natural processes are affected by man because there is a close link, in other words, a mutual interaction between human morality and the natural environment. This is evident in the play because all is clearly not well between the gods and the human characters in the play as a prophecy of doom looms all through the play.

First, Soyinka pushes for a change in thought from thinking of the universe as dead to expressing it as alive. For the playwright, in regarding the universe as alive, and ourselves as continuously sustained within that aliveness, we see that we are intimately related to everything that exists. This insight represents a new way of looking at and relating to the world and overcomes the profound separation that has marked human lives. It is therefore with this insight that Soyinka reveals that the forest is not as lifeless as humans think. In fact the use of the forest as setting is deliberate and appropriate at the same time. This is because, in the twenty first century, forest means nothing to people but a vast reserve of building materials, paper and other resources for satisfying man's ever increasing wants rather than an autonomous and sublime landscape. In the context of the play, the forest serves as a place of refuge; as the adventurous characters escape to the forest to seek moral and physical refuge. Once in the forest, the young adventurers fall under the thrall of supernatural elements that possess supernatural powers through which they control their actions and reactions. This is an indication that the forest is not lifeless but houses other beings which have the power to interfere with the lives of characters in the play. Gods from the pantheon of Yoruba mythology are presented as humans. Such

presentation marks a breakaway from the established barrier between the world of the gods and the world of the living; in other words, Nature and the world of man. For instance Soyinka presents Obatala in the form of the Forest Head who reveals himself as a wise old man called Obaneji to the three guilty mortals: Demoke, Rola and Adenebi. Once the mortals are deep into the forest, Forest Head reveals himself as a god and confronts the mortals with their previous lives in the court of Mata Kharibu. He allows them to witness their previous crimes—which were similar in nature to their present crimes—in order for them to admit their sins and repent of them. Through such confrontation, Forest Head wishes to lead the mortals to break the cycle of human suffering by allowing them an insight into the past and present.

Soyinka uses the context of a night in the forest as well as the character, Forest Head to personify, and illustrate the relationship between Nature and humans. This thought of Nature or the universe as a unified living organism may sound new for the twenty-first century but the idea is an old and ancient one. For instance, Plato more than two thousand years ago described the universe as "one whole of wholes" and "a single living creature that encompasses all of the living creatures within it". In spite of the seeming separation and division in the universe, the fact that the universe is a unified whole continues to be acknowledged by various traditions and wisdom the world over. Various religions and cultural traditions have remarkable descriptions of the universe that go beyond mere poetic and symbolic descriptions; the notion of a living universe, therefore appeals to many, across the globe.

It is within this mindset that deities and spirits in the form of trees, rivers, precious stones, sun, darkness and others are very much present in the play. The Crier for instance summons all to the welcome of the dead:

To all such as dwell in these Forests; Rock devils,

Earth imps, Tree devils, ghomids, dewilds, genie
Incubi, succubi, windhorls, bits and halves and such
Sons and subjects of Forest Father, and all
That dwell in the domain, 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
When the understreams that whirl them endlessly
Complete such a circle...
Take note this selection, is by the living.
We hold these rites, at human insistence.
By proclamation, let the mists of generations
Be now dispersed. Forest Father, unveil, unveil
The phantasmagoria of protagonists from the dead pg45

This is an indication that the forest is alive and serves a purpose beyond that, which man sees and uses it for. It is also a home to gods and other beings. The scenario above is summed up in Capra (1982: 71) where he refers to the world as, "a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole"; thus indicating that there is a sort of interdependence between the inhabitants of the earth and the earth. In fact, it is so interconnected that it is impossible for man to do anything without corresponding effects. Consequently, there is no such thing as man being the centre of truth or intelligence as more recent philosophers have dismissed that fact. Foucault (1966: 132) for instance refers to an individual as, "a node within a network". On the same note, Campbell refers to humans as a part of vast networks and "texts written by larger and stronger forces". Thus most of the things humans depend on are influences outside them.

Human connections with the earth are revealed in the play text through the co-mingling of the physical, and the spiritual. The playwright reveals this through the heavy use of rituals.

Rituals according to Harrison D.D (1982:25), "Is a process by which man can have direct access to the gods or spirits; a powerful social vehicle which publicly confirms social values. It is transcendental in that it transforms through spirit possession, the earthly to the spiritual and thus reaffirms the relations of man to the gods". In "The Fourth Stage", Soyinka refers to the language and music used in these rituals as mythopoeic, for him, the language undergoes transformation and 'transcends particularization to tap the tragic source whence spring the familiar weird disruptive melodies'. Furthermore he states that at the moments of rituals,

> The senses do not at such moments interpret myth in their particular concretions; we are left only with the emotional and spiritual values, the essential experience of cosmic reality. The forms of music are not correspondences at such moments to the physical world, nor at this moment nor at any other moment. Pg 26.

This implies that, moments of rituals are moments of interactions between man and the cosmic forces. In ***A Dance of the Forests*** (1963) there exist a cyclic trinity which involves the union of the dead, the living and the unborn which is also representative of the past, present and the future. All three exists alongside and make a part of one another's existence. However, the opening of the play clearly shows that all is not well. There has been an imbalance in the cosmos which is caused by man and as such, the cycle of Nature which includes the gods is not happy with the new human community. This explains why unpleasant guests are to be sent rather than eminent ancestors to mark the celebration for which humans had carved a totem.

The carved totem is central to the play as it gives significance and meaning to the issues of the ecology/environment in the play. Through the totem, we get to understand Soyinka's statements on the ecology as well as the environment. It is a controversial piece that is meant to

be used to celebrate the gathering of the tribes but on the other hand, it is the cause of anger on the community. The carved totem is a symbol of the current indiscriminate chopping of trees as news in recent times is filled with the indiscriminate chopping down of trees, thus the disappearance of vast tracks of forests lands which has ecological implications.

In the play, humans characters fail to understand that non-human forms of life possess special powers and are sacred. In the spirit of celebrating 'the gathering of the tribes', they ask Demoke to carve a monument of the great reunion between man and the spirits. This act however translates into impunity, as the human characters not only carve the totem, but they build a road right through the forest thus destroying other trees in the process. This is symbolic of the indiscriminate felling of trees in current times. It is interesting to note that from time immemorial in certain cultures, especially African culture, it is the norm to proclaim certain areas or elements (like trees, mountains) in Nature sacred, and it has often been claimed that if these particular areas were destroyed, then various punishments would be inflicted on man. This is obvious as Eshuoro, whose sacred tree is 'Araba' (the one chopped and carved by Demoke) considers this act as a desecration of his self worth. Not only do the humans direct the cutting of the Araba tree, they also clear the forest of trees in preparation for the celebration. This fetches Demoke and indeed all human kind Eshuoro's anger and promise of punishments. This is revealed in Eshuoro's conversation with Murete:

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 my limbs that were hacked off piece by piece. For my eyes that were gauged and my roots disrespectfully made naked to the world. For the desecration of my forest body...

> Have you not seen this new thing he made for me? The beacon for the gathering of the tribes. Have you not seen the centre piece of the vulgarity.... The totem, my final insult. The final taunt from human pigs. The tree that is marked down for oro, the tree from which my follower fell to his death, foully or by accident.... But my body was stripped by the impious hands of Demoke, Ogun's favored slave of the forge. My head was hacked off by his axe. Trampled, sweated on. bled on, my body's shame pointed at the sky by the adze of Demoke, will I let this day pass without vengeance claimed blood for sap?

Eshuoro's declaration of anger above refers not only to Demoke but to all humans whom he refers to as "human pigs" who are indeed responsible for the deforestation, pollution and the destruction of the environment as a whole; for in Eshuoro's words, the forest ,"stinks of human obscenities".

According to IAEA report of 2002, "Culture affects how scientific findings are interpreted and how ideas are developed. The cultural framework itself is structured through religious tradition or the lack of them- ideologies, politics, scientific understanding, education and world views". Thus various cultures hold different views as regards their interpretation of natural processes and their moral and ethical significance. In the modern age, especially when science started opening new vistas of knowledge by revealing the 'secrets' of Nature one by one, man gradually developed the culture of greed for more and more possessions, adopting a violent and aggressive attitude towards Nature forgetting that he is part of Nature and by implication gradually developing scanty respect for moral and spiritual values. The consequence is the alienation of mankind from Nature. The net result is the deterioration of man's physical and mental health on the one hand, and the rapid depletion of non-renewable natural resources and ecological destruction/environmental pollution on the other. Murete reveals the wrath of the

deities on man when he declares that, "... we have claimed our own victims for every tree that is felled or for every beast that is slaughtered, there is recompense given or forced" pg 42.

The cosmic forces show how they have been contaminated and stained by human violence and cruelty. It is in the spirit of vengeance on man that other spirits of Nature that Soyinka use in the play to represent the totality of Nature's capacity of denying man of the comforts, they have hitherto provided. Through these spirits, Soyinka makes some statements critical to the ecological/environmental crisis that the entire human race faces today:

The spirit of the sun prophesizes doom when he says that:

> "Red is the pit of the sun's entrails, and I
> Who light the crannies of the bole
> Would speak, but shadows veil the eye that pierces with the thorn.
> I know the stole
> That warms the shoulders of the moon.
> But this is not its shadow. And I trace
> No course that leaves a cloud" The Sun cries Noon
> Whose hand is it that covers up his face. pp 66-67.

It is important to note that of all forms of environmental crisis that humans face today, global warming is perhaps the worst. This is because over the years, there has been an increase in the earth's temperature due to the emission of carbon dioxide and other heat trapping pollution sources mainly from industrial sources cars, burning of fossil fuel as well as the emission of other green house gases which results in the planet getting warmer than required. Consequently, every creature on earth is affected; from fish in the oceans, to trees which might not be able to filter the increasing carbon emissions, to humans who will eventually breathe the wrong

combinations that make up the air, to the melting of glaciers, the rise in sea level, the extinction of certain species and ultimately, to the imbalance in Nature and its system.

Spirits of the Waters and Rivers on the other hand complain of pollution and stains and as a result, they will no longer avail themselves to man. Indeed water pollution is a reality today, especially in this technological and industrial age which speedily produces waste. In spite of its prima position in the lives of humans, they have paid no attention to this fact. The UN WWAP (2008) report claims that, "Everyday, two million tonnes of sewage and industrial agricultural waste are discharged into the world's water. Lack of adequate sanitation contaminates water courses worldwide and this is one of the most significant forms of water pollution". Humans are the greatest producers of these wastes and ironically are the greatest recipients of the harm that accrues from such acts. Everywhere is surrounded by an empire of waste and these dumped refuse in the atmosphere and waters keep accumulating. This brings to mind Fromm's (2007: 35), argument where he says,

> Suddenly the human race has been put into the position of affluent teenagers who dump beer cans from their moving cars and then drive off. The cans appear to have vanished, but, no there they are astoundingly enough, rolling around the neighbourhood where they have been dumped... the neighbourhood is a place of beer cans; the ocean a place of toxic effluents, the sky is vaporized garbage. And to add insult to injury, man's unconquerable mind turns out to have a mouth through which it is fed; and worse still, it is being fed garbage, its own.

Lack of adequate sanitation contaminates water courses worldwide and this is one of the most significant forms of water pollution". In fact most humans see these natural bodies as a thing to be used; a thing stripped of its hidden nature and its focal value. Thus, if industrial waste had to

be removed, then Nature had conveniently supplied man with rivers, oceans and lands for that purpose. Eshuoro reiterates this when he says "When humans preserve a little bush behind their homes, it is only because they want somewhere for their garbage — dead dog and excreta" pg23. All forms of toxins not only affect open water bodies but also the underground waters. For this, the spirits prophesize 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".pg 66.

Other life sustaining sources also complain of the activities of man. The spirit of the palms also declares his withdrawal of the source of nourishment of man:

> "White skeins wove me, I spirits of the Palm, Now course I red. I
> who suckle blackened hearts, know. Heads will fall down. Crimson
> in their red". Pg 68

With all these proclamations, the human race seems to be in trouble because these sources are sources of life proclaiming death for man.

Following the progress in the field of science and the acquisition of wealth by mechanical exploitation of natural resources; humans have become more avaricious in their attitude and in their values as well. This is because in recent times humans have valued greed as a socially

acceptable norm as it ironically has a "positive impact" on the economy. Consequently, they have lost their sense of ethics, judgement, wisdom and empathy. This elevation of greed has rendered humans, slaves to their insatiable passions. It is in this light that Spirit of Precious Stones and that of the Pachyderms who represents human pursuit for material possession predict calamity for humans:

Spirits of the Precious Stones: Still do I draw them, down
Into the pit that glitters,
I, Spirits of gold and diamonds
Mine is the vain light courting death
A-ah! Blight this eye that threaded
Rocks with light, earth with golden lodes.
Traitor to the guardian tribe, turn
Turn to lead!pp 67

Due to greed man has used natural resources much more than necessary which in turn leads to a difficult life.

Indeed, there is a close relationship between man's morals and the natural resources available to him According to Eagleton Terry (2003), "The link between the natural and the human, the material and the meaningful is morality". In the play, everybody is implicated in the cycle of moral degeneration from the past to the present. Everybody is guilty and responsible for the destruction of the ecology and as such, there is the need for the re-assessment of values. The structures of crimes implicate not only the present generation but also the past. Soyinka has always re-iterated that the past, present and future are a chain; a cycle in which all things are related. The scene at the court of Mata Kharibu enables readers to see the demerits and shortcomings of the past which is full of deception, prejudice, cruelty and brutality. All present characters have their parallels that have existed in the past. For instance: Demoke and the Court

poet. Adenebi and the Historian, Rola and Madam Tortoise. This practical illustration indicates that humans have lived with the psychological realities of greed, hatred, anger, envy, jealousy, pride and fear which have not changed over the years. For instance Demoke dedicates the totem to Madame Tortoise; a woman who in Ogunba's (1975) words, "is conceived in the tradition of the Helen of Troy, Cleopatra and Dido and such women the world over who have provoked the wildest and basest passions in men and thereby become the cause of fierce wars and carnage and sometimes for the flimsiest of reasons". This singular act has severe implications as the totem which is supposed to be in commemoration of the celebrations of the gathering of the tribes is dedicated to violence.

With the past and present fraught with violence, oppression, greed, torture, tyranny, exploitation and the likes, there are indications that the future is grim. This is because Soyinka has always reiterated the presence of a link between the past, the present and the future. The community in the play is faced with problems far more complex than what the people in the community think. The lack of respect for Nature which most of the characters display extends: not only to all people but also to the future generation who will eventually inherit a vastly degraded planet. Going by the activities of the characters; many of the earth's habitats, animals and plants may not be known by the future generation. The future represented in the character of the half child prophesises his death even before he is born:

> ".... 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."pg 64.

This, certainly is the concern of all ecocritics and environmentalists; the fact that the future is uncertain. Man is gradually starving the future generations for his present wants. The future appears even gorier when Forest Head orders the unmasking of the three town dwellers so that they may see the final enactment of the future physically. The presence of the Three Triplets and the nature of their dance suggest a dreadful future that had been prophesized by all other cosmic forces including the Ant Leader. Figueiredo in an article describes the Three Triplets as horrible as the future man has carved for himself:

> The First Triplet is a manifestation of that good to come', for which numberless, nameless human beings have died. But it is grotesque, headless and no 'good' end at all. It is followed by the Second triplet: the Greater Cause that lies like a mirage, beyond all immediate ends. It, too, is grotesque: a huge, drooling head only, the complement of the headless First Triplet. The First and Second Triplets are linked to the world of the living by a comment of Forest Head. The triplets, 'perversions' as he calls them, are born when 'weak, pitiable criminals ... acquire power over one another, and their instincts are fulfilled a thousand fold, an hundred thousand fold'. There is a Third Triplet, 'fanged and bloody'. 'I am posterity. Can no one see on what milk I have been nourished?

The half child struggles to move as far away as possible from Eshuoro who really is the hideous Figure in Red and who is bent on carrying out his revenge on humans; an indication that the future is uncertain. For the ecocritics, it is irresponsible and morally wrong to commit the future generations to a polluted planet. For such scenarios can only lead to a world of bondage.

Morality for Soyinka is, "that which creates harmony in the cosmos". In fact, it forms the key element in his worldview; a worldview in which man is not an isolated individual but an

interactive reality that exists within a broader system. Man is dependent on other entities that exist within the entire system. As such, acting in the interest of these other entities upon which he is dependent is only logical and moral. The current ecological crisis to a large extent is the recipient of man's actions. As such, when irresponsible values like greed, profligate lust, violence, hatred, lust and the likes grip the heart of man, then moral degeneration, epidemic and widespread violence on all of earth's inhabitants become the ultimate outcome as illustrated in the play. According to Sandell (1981:66), "The world including nature and mankind stands or falls with the type of moral force at work: if immorality grips the society, man and nature deteriorate; if morality reigns, the quality of human life and nature improves". Thus greed, hatred and delusion produce pollution within and without.

Soyinka therefore advocates for a sense of meaningful connection with the earth and to the entire community of life in the earth which include: the past, present and future generations. Actions contrary to this will result in tragedy which he explains in "The Fourth Stage" as the anguish felt from the severance and fragmentation of the essence from self might befall human kind. This is because Nature and man's life are so interlinked that it is difficult for humans to separate themselves from its influence. Therefore they have to accept both Nature's bounties and adversities consequent upon their actions.

In *A Dance of the Forest* (1963)**,** Soyinka redefines the world of humans and argues for an increased interplay between physical and the spiritual to sustain healthy ties. For the playwright, the sustainability of a healthy environment lies in the acknowledgement of the fact that there exists a connection between man and Nature, and the moral will to sustain these connections. Failure to concede to this fact will lead to grave consequences as found in the society depicted in *The Beatification of an Area Boy* (2002).

CHAPTER FOUR

MODERNITY, CORRUPTION AND THE ECOLOGICAL SPACE IN, *THE BEATIFICATION OF AN AREA BOY*

This chapter introduces the concept of modernity in order to explore the uniqueness of life in modern as opposed to traditional societies. It emphasizes the ways in which structural changes (especially in our relationship with Nature) -often of global proportions- have transformed our everyday experiences and have continued to do so. Modernity is implicated in the ecological crisis today. It is believed by most philosophers that modernity and modern progress intensified the profound shift of paradigms that radically transformed our understanding of Nature. Thus in the name of modernity and progress man's relationship with Nature has been restructured. It is this restructured relationship that is believed to sustain the preoccupation of the technological era, which in turn leads to the subversion of custom and tradition, practiced in the pre-industrial era as a basis of social relationship.

Modernity is a brain child of the enlightenment that places supreme trust on man and reason. All through the twentieth century, the concept of modernity has been employed as an essential and a universal stage in which all societies would have to undergo at one time or the other. It is premised upon the basic belief that reasoning of man can control the mechanism of Nature and social order and in the process provide happiness to people with the laws and rules provided by reason. The project of modernity was devoted to social progress and it sums up the uniqueness and enthusiasm of the social processes that trailed the enlightenment period which marked an evident break from the pre-industrial or traditional way of life. Budak (2008), refers to modernity as a movement which is built upon the sovereignty of reason over all and aimed at "creating and constantly enlarging a space in which people can establish new contractual

relationships free from the binding social ties of the past". The birth of modernity entailed a number of interrelated processes which include: new economic ways of working, which led to rapid continuous growth of productive capacities, the development of new forms of government, the expansion of capitalism and the western expansion which led to the formation of modern societies. Although the Europeans began to explore the globe as early as the fifteenth century, subsequent contacts between the West and 'Others' translated into trade, plunder and eventual colonization. This expansion provided the wealth and raw materials in the mercantile interest of the European economic development. On the contrary, it led to the destruction of societies and cultures in the regions labelled as the 'Other'.

The growth of science and technology cannot be dissociated from modernity. In fact science and technology characterizes the triumph of reason and rationality in the modern way of life. Scientific knowledge and technological systems have played a pivotal role in transforming the natural world into a mechanical one, subject to human co-ordination and control. The Romantics and other philosophers like Heidegger, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcusse and critics like Dana Phillips, Fritjof Capra and Vandana Shiva amongst others, associate modernity and its accoutrement (modern science and technology) with the exploitative view of Nature. Furthermore, it is believed that this exploitative view of Nature also affects our social relationships. Oelshlaeger in Nabholz (2007:95) in his definition of modernity says it is,

> A complicated concatenation of ideological presuppositions including ideas that progress is inevitable, that the power of science and technology is unlimited, that humankind represents the apex of creation, and that the natural and cultural world can be understood on the basis of the machine metaphor.

Oelshlaeger's view of modernity indicates that the exploitative view of Nature affects the cultural world. In the same vein, Horkheimer and Adorno in Nabholz (2007) opine that, "what man wants to learn from Nature is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men". Thus the ways in which man structures his relationship with Nature (which in this context is utilitarian and exploitative) in many ways affect our social relationships. This ensures not just the oppression of Nature, but of human beings alike as well as social foundations. It is from this point of view that the play *Beatification of an Area Boy* (2002) will be studied. This chapter examines the play's engagement with the interlocking bonds between ecological degradation, socioeconomic crisis, as well as psychological disorientations. Soyinka constructs a dramatic understanding of how the restructuring of modern man's relationship with Nature affects cultural and environmental spaces.

Unlike the play *A Dance of the Forests* (1963) which is set in the forest, the setting of this play is a place in populated terrains, in the city of Lagos in Nigeria, which in turn belongs to a continent which has experienced and still experiences a rapid flux of changing identities and personal challenges since inception to date. The country in the play has been characterized by social instability and insecurity, which in turn has resulted into a myriad of problems ranging from poverty to corruption, religious charlatanism, war, restiveness, unstable political system, dictatorial governance, lack of adequate basic amenities amongst others. In spite of the numerous natural resources, it has undergone dramatic economic deterioration especially under the military regime which has dominated the country for the better part since independence. This condition is synonymous with the condition in Nigeria, other countries in Africa, as well as other third world countries that have had to contend with the challenges of the modernity project. Keren (1989:105) refers to the modernity project as one of fact and fiction. She opines that,

> Its facts lie in the tremendous cultural and political power concentrated by leaders with like-minded notions of how societies could and should be organized. From the halls of science to the streets of the city, that power has involved knowing the physical and social world in which humans live and then controlling and dominating it.

The play invites us to take a hard look at congested terrains, where increasing numbers of poor and marginalized people are organized around interrelated social and ecological problems. Although modernity has increased food production, eliminated diseases, expanded cities, widened motorways, amongst others, it has also regarded Nature as an artefact that could be known and reshaped for the good of mankind. However, with the ecological crisis in recent times, modernity has been regarded a failed project and a subject of dispute especially in third world countries like Nigeria, where modernity signified a radical break with the past in terms of, the changes in the social, political, economic, educational and religious realm. This is plausible considering the fact that the entity Nigeria is a result of the modernization project.

However, unlike the West where modernization was shaped by the forces of production and the corresponding historical forces of industrialization, urbanization and class conflict; modernization in Nigeria as well as other African countries was a state project on behalf of the imperialists. In order to make modernity succeed under these conditions, the new elites that took over from the colonialists had to alter the indigenous notion of time (which is cyclical in many African cultures) and embraced a linear, progressive, ever moving, non-stop accumulation notion of time in response to the call of modernity. Hitherto, traditional values and culture had always provided a system of meanings, but with the eventual advent of modernity and its accoutrements, these systems of belief began to be challenged. The new system introduced many new cultural

meanings into the society to replace the old and lost ones. It is as a result of this that many writers have tried to analyze the effects of modernity.

Analyses of modernity in Africa have emerged from a range of epistemological positions. While some writers have focused on the effects of modernity on state traditions, others have concentrated on the transformations that it has generated in religious structures, rapid urban growth, the overall shifts in traditions and mentalities, as well as the inclinations of change in the socio-political frame work. All these studies provide salient insights into the effects of modernity on the African structure.

Soyinka's position on the issues of modernity has always bothered on the consequences of abandoning traditional values in pursuit of an alien foreign course; thus, the ecological crisis is a crisis of modernity. That is why in play after play, we see him favouring traditional values over the modern. The result of abandoning traditional values is what we see in our environment and what he tries to capture in the play, *The Beatification of an Area Boy* (2002). Soyinka says, "The themes...are built around the sadistic susceptibility of Nigeria's contemporary society, a collective hysteria that has resulted in an epidemic of public lynching for imaginary crimes and the erasure of Maroko from the face of the earth". On a similar note, Imo Eshiet sums up the themes in the play when he says, (2004:250)

> A trenchantly biting interrogation of a cocktail of adversities, including the free fall to anarchy resulting from the military usurpation of political power in Nigeria, showcasing the country as being engulfed in a spiral of military ambushes and economic decay.... The playwright uses the synecdoche of Lagos as a coat hanger, upon which he paints a murderously annihilating picture of a failed state, a deceased political condition, marked by fiscal prudence, parlous economic situation massacre and rapine,

> alienated state assets, unmitigated poverty, misery, indeed a sorry saga of cultural, political and social defenestration.

Beyond these issues of corruption, there is this tremendous concern for ecology in the play. Soyinka tries to warn the world against the destruction of ecological relations in such a way that it might result in the disappearance of life from the face of the earth. He examines the ethical implications of the present relationship with Nature and repeatedly expresses his fears and outcome in both his fictional and non-fictional writings.

In *The Beatification of an Area Boy,* one of such ethical implications is corruption and its trappings. In this play, Soyinka examines the insidious influence of a polluted environment on the human mind as well as on human relations. He attempts to explain that an unhealthy environment debases human reasoning and emotions. The play features the disruptions kindled by imperialism, industrial capitalism, and underdevelopment on communities deeply rooted in the land and attached to a particular territory. The setting of the play is a city which seems to be a symbol of ecological destruction where life is fluttering with pollution from vehicle exhaust, over population, populated environment as well as polluted human personalities. People in this over-populated city, expectedly inhale polluted air and exhale polluted psyches as seen in the different roles of character within the play. In line with this argument, Wolanski in an article "Human Health as an Ecological Problem" argues that, "the dynamic balance between culture and Nature that determines physical and psychological health has been disturbed". Consequently, people are neither physically sound nor psychologically and spiritually happy in the play. There lies a lacuna in the socio-political consciousness and their cultural and economic life is deficient. Going by Wolanski's argument, the environment and ecology of a place determines the

happiness of a people whether spiritually, physically, mentally, socially, politically, economically and culturally.

In the process of advocating the necessity to acknowledge the significance of a healthy ecological system, the playwright draws our attention to the factors responsible for the division between man and Nature, which include modernity and all its accoutrements. The setting captures the fiction of the modernity project which is expressed in the physical and psychological demarcation of class structures. For instance, alongside the glitter and rubble of the barracks lie the ruins of Maroko with the most wretched, populated, and frightening neighbourhoods. This place serves as home to tens of thousands or even millions as referred to by the character, Judge. This kind of setting according to Keren (1989: 10) makes all urban humanity a great extended "family of eyes" which also brings forth the discarded step children of that family. Thus on one hand, we have the GRA's, the barracks and on the other hand exists Maroko town which is described in the play as, "... a ruckus, over a wretched shanty town,... stinking.., with no electricity or piped borne water, no sewage or garbage disposal..." pg 86. The playwright challenges the logic of the social and cultural constructs that accompany urbanity in the wake of modernity wherein, urban dwellers do not make contact with other communities which results in, a lack of connection. This is a result of the over indulgence in technology and materialistic values, which in turn cuts off not only the 'Self' from 'Other', but also harms Nature.

Heidegger's argument is germane at this point. Due to modernity and its trappings (urbanization, technology, capitalism etc), humans have interpreted Nature and nature's space as a mere resource waiting to be exploited. Consequently, they try to catch the last glimpse of Nature in likely places, and in this context, Maroko seemed perfect. Subsequently, parks, natural resorts and caricatures of Nature are created, the original inhabitants are sent out and no

consultations are made to the original inhabitants. These acts lead to a faulty notion of the place of man in the society; it leads to the irrational categorization of humans into classes based on wealth. In the process, it empowers some and disenfranchises others. According to Soyinka, "Maroko inhabitants had the misfortune of occupying a view on the lagoon coveted for luxury, mansions and condominiums by the military, their business friends and other high priced cronies". In line with this, 'Military Officer', a character in the play, describes Maroko as a place that is "disease ridden! No point developing it for decent citizens only to have them die of some lingering viruses from way back. Those squatters might be immune to anything but we have to think of the future residents" pg102. The future residents in this context are the elites, the rich and high ranking military officers.

One of the effects of blind imitation of foreign culture as against the indigenous is the area of decision making. Decision making in modern Nigeria does not take relevant traditional factors, which have bearing on the experiences and everyday interaction of the people, on whose behalf the decisions are made into consideration. Native circumstances and realities are often abandoned (due to the dangerous attachment to the values of Western Europe and America) in favour of colonial metropolitan considerations and consequently, third world leaders and functionaries fail to investigate and determine local preferences. In the case of Maroko, the plan for Maroko appears to be humanitarian, as the description of the place in the play depicts that it is an eye sore due to its deplorable condition, but in Sule's (2004) opinion, it would not have been out of place to consider cultural factors like, the extended family responsibility, family size, as well as socio-economic situations amongst others. The Maroko inhabitants are driven out of their homes and are made to settle in other less desirable locations. The result is, over population in another ecological location which in turn poses ecological/environmental problems; thus the

government ends up averting one disaster with another. It is this kind of system that produces social miscreants like: Boyko, Sanda, trader, parking attendants as well as other area boys. This attitude is also value laden as it only serves to strengthen hegemonic prerogatives; a class stratified society where those who are highly privileged and also have an enormous power of purchase promote injustice which is validated by the system that the society operates. Those who are placed in the lower order in this economical hierarchy are relegated to subhuman status. These deprivations of the privileges, the comforts, luxury and power of purchase, enjoyed by the privileged class, results in the poor unleashing their anger on the rich, and even the society in general. Faced with this kind of situation, the struggle for survival becomes the logic of living a good life rather than having human values; thus we see the characters Sanda, Boyko and other area boys doing dubious business for a living. Miseyi has this to say about them,

> Those bullies? Enforcers and extortionists? Thugs, yes, sheer thugs. Ready to serve the highest bidder. They make pot holes in the middle of the road, then extort money from the motorists for their -public spirited- service in filling them up. They break your windscreen if you don't pay up or slash your tyres. They rip the necklace off your neck in a traffic hold-up or snatch your watch. They are robbers. Daylight robbers. No better than armed robbers…. Pg102

The drive to modernize cannot be divorced from the evolution of technologies that are designed to profit from Nature. In Heidegger's criticism of technology, he argues that technology conceals the truths and places a lacuna between man and Nature, such that man begins to think he is getting closer to the truth but in the actual sense, he alienates himself from Nature. Soyinka as well, often condemns the unrestricted use of technology. This is because technology, when not restricted (by indigenous culture or religious limitations), has a tendency to become ever more

autonomous so much so that technology may gradually shroud all areas of life. Mother of the day in the play refers to the present age as the "hurry-hurry" age. An age where people are more concerned about the means rather than the end. This is a concern in which, "the pursuit of maximum efficiency is either marginalized or reshaped in order to fill the technological framework" Ellul (2003: 5). In order words, people are more concerned with devices than those things that connect or engage man with Nature. Characters are seen to have embarked on a reckless culture of consumption. The play makes it clear that a social system which is erected on the power of technology and luxury industry generates a consumer culture marked by snobbery, pride, and artificiality, has no concern for Nature and the environment. Such a system taking man as separate from Nature becomes one of the major cause of the ecological crisis. Technological superiority of commodities determines the value of things and the relationship amongst humans, as well as between humans and non-humans. For instance the character Pilot charges Big man shopper double the usual amount when he gets to see the interior of his car. Similarly, bicycles are regarded as an eyesore in Lagos because it is not in vogue.

> I think say market be like prostitute, money for hand, open ya leg. I sell stereo... everything from video to electric toothbrush. Automatic become the national craze- because why? Because nobody wan use in power again....pg31

One character in the play that constantly reiterates this connection to the world of things is Mama put. She constantly recalls the past with a sense of nostalgia. She registers her closeness to Nature as she prefers clay pots, clay bowls and mangrove swamps.

With technology came the discovery of oil. Oil otherwise known as black gold occupies a prima position in the nation's economy. With oil boom came doom, agriculture was abandoned and government involved itself in reckless spending rather than economic improvement.

> den oil boom come. Government dash everybody salary increase, salary advance, salary arrears, motor car advance, motor car incentive, motorcycle advance, all kind vehicle allowance, any kind incentive pg 27.

The oil boom triggered social unrest within the country. This is as a result of the clamour for control of resources by perceived disenfranchised or oppressed ethnic groups. A cursory glance at history will reveal the fact that, Black gold may produce wealth for some, but it often brings hardship and misery to the society where it is found. Petroleum dependent countries are plagued by corrupt and authoritarian governments, lopsided and unsustainable economic development and violent conflict. Disaffected rebels challenge governments and both use oil and gas revenues to purchase arms. Environmental damage by oil extraction can give rise to protest movements which are frequently met by violent repression.

> In the play, the conflict which arises as a result of the struggle for resource control leads to the civil war. Mama put captures I hoped I had escaped such sights forever. While the civil war lasted, oh yes. It was like that for us most of the time. First the Biafrans who insisted we were part of them. We packed our belongings and drifted to the villages. Then the Federal army came with their gospel of liberation. So we trooped back, just like that. Then the Biafran army returned and back we went on the roads, along bush paths, knee deep in swamps and foraging for food like beasts of the forests. And yet again, the federals counter attacked and we were told that this time, the enemy was gone for good. Not that the

> killings ever stopped. Both sides seemed to enjoy playing at judge and executioner. Private scores were settled as former friends and even relations denounced one another pg75.

The war, apparently is not over; whether ecological war, economic war and even environmental war. This is because any social system that thrives on injustice both to humans and to Nature knows no peace. The unlimited use of natural resources for destructive ends, the eviction of a throng of humanity from a particular location without compensation only results in socio-economic problems. These problems are evident in Nigeria as well as other countries across the world, as seen in the crisis we see and hear every day.

With the several human induced ecological disaster and its implications which has killed many and placed countless people on danger list, the questions, what it means to be a human being in a world of shifting identity, and what constitutes the essence of our humanity become relevant, especially now when life is only experienced through technology and its products. In this technological age, humans have reached what Hayles (1999) refers to as, "the post human condition". A condition that suggests that there exist a mechanistic extension of the human body. In an article 'How we became Post Human" Hayles (1999:1) asks, "what are we to make of the post human? The terror is relatively easy to understand. 'Post' with its dual connotation of superseding the human and coming after it, hints that the days of the human may be numbered". The indiscriminate use of technological/mechanical gadgets like, bombs, guns, bayonets, dynamites and other destructive machineries without giving a thought to the future only shows that man is sowing his seed of annihilation. For instance, the gun, bayonet, mace and even dynamite as well as the violent use of fellow humans for rituals in the play, act as an extension of the characters. The soldiers prove themselves to be totally unconcerned about the moral

implication of the act of destroying any life form. They use the mechanical extension of their bodies to perpetuate violence and this leads to an imbalance in the eco-system. Mama Put gives an apt description for some of the violent acts in the play,

> Medal! And what would I do with that? Keep your medals and give me back- yes. Even the mangrove swamps ... They all got medals. Those who did this thing to us. Those who turned our fields of garden eggs and prize tomatoes into mush, pulp and putrid flesh — that's what they got-medals! They plundered the livestock, uprooted yams and cassava and what did they plant in their place? The warm bodies of our loved ones. My husband among them.... But that proved only the beginning of the seven plagues. After the massacre of the youths came the plague of the oil rigs and the new death of farmland, shrines and fish sanctuaries, and the eternal flares that turn night into day and blanket the land with globules of soot..pg 40

It is important to note that human culture is developed within the sights, sounds, scents, tastes and feelings of a particular ecological system. Such ecological system is vital to the fostering of sustainable living in the different parts of the earth. Thus the current rapid degradation of the earth's eco-systems through lethal technologies justified as necessary for protecting specific human populations, and enriching special corporate interest not only increases inter-human tensions, but also forecloses the possibilities of sustainable living, the elimination of poverty, and social injustice, and in the end lead to greater human and ecological disasters. This justifies Gandhi's saying that, "the earth has enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed"

Above all, there is a deep ecological and moral concern in the play. As the play progresses, readers cannot escape the hovering images of dust, smoke, stench, heat, chrome, violence and noise. The atmosphere remains grim all through. Our attention is also drawn to the

mounds of rubbish which is exposed by the human induced early sunrise. In one of the songs lies a satiric remark of the environmental landscape.

> I love this Lagos, I no go lie..., when Lagos belch, the nation swell. When the nation shit, na Lagos dey smell. The river wey flow for Makurdi market. You go find in deposit for Lagos bucket. The Russian astronauts flying in space. Radioed a puzzle to their Moscow base. They said we are flying over Nigeria. And we see high mountains in built up area. Right in the middle of heavy traffic. Is this space madness, tell us quick? The strange result was fed to computers. which soon analysed the ponderous beauties. The computer replied, don't be snobbish. You know it is a load of their national rubbish....ppl7-18.

We do not find any reference in the play that any group of people; whether rich or poor are truly concerned with the decay of Nature around them or the eco-system they are living in. The rich are unperturbed, while the poor do not know they have a right to decency. Thus the culture displayed by the characters disregards Nature which soon becomes the cause of the decay not only of the ecological system but the whole society as well.

Soyinka proves the fact that Nature is not an "Other" as perceived by man. It is also not silent after all as man is constantly reminded by every earthquake, flood, volcanic eruption, acid rain, hurricane etc. The character, Mama Put strongly warns that the consequences, especially of global warming, are grave.

> A sky such as this brings no good with it. The clouds have vanished from the sky but where are they? In the hearts of those below. In the rafters. Over the hearth. Blighting the vegetable patch. Slinking through the orange grove. Rustling the fish pond. When the gods mean to be kind to us, they draw up the gloom to

> themselves — yes. a cloud is a good sign, only not many people know that. Even a wisp, a mere shred of cloud over my roof would bring me comfort, but not this stark, cruel brightness. It's not natural. It's a deceit. You watch out. We'd better all watch out. Pg42

This makes it clear that, any system that is established on the power of capital and luxury industry has no concern for ecology. Such a system that assumes man, as separate from Nature becomes one of the major cause of environmental abuse.

The play gives an understanding that environmental space and the inhabitants are inseparable, and that the well being of ecology and all it entails is equally a part of the well being of humans. People in the play are shown as agents as well as the victims of the rotten socio-economic and ecological system. It is a morality tale which informs readers that a healthy society emerges from the kindred relationship of humanity with Nature. It also suggests that the incessant and unrestrained search for material comforts and its multiplication is at odds with moral as well as ecological progress. Above all Soyinka tries to prove that the present ecological problem is not a disease but a symptom. The disease itself is the concept and patterns of growth and development that are followed in Africa today.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the twenty first century, as some of the most daunting ecological problems confront all of us in this planet, it has become more evident that the problem with man is his chosen relationship with Nature and his attitude towards it. It is particularly man's restructuring of himself as related to Nature and ultimately, the relationship between the two. However, if man is to effectively address our ever growing ecological problems; then there must be a reappraisal of some of man's most basic assumptions about who he is and what his place is within the broader ecological system, for it is impossible to dissociate the question of what we do from the question of where we are. This is because, how people relate with their surroundings is to a certain degree, determined by their basic metaphysical and moral constructions about the world. Consequently, this study, through the literary works of Soyinka tried to investigate the relationship between Nature and man. Furthermore, the work also studied the changing ecological systems and the impact of chosen cultures on the ecosystem and how man's restructuring of his relationship with Nature (which is summed up into larger cultural systems of meaning) influence actions. The study reveals that humans are the only species that have wreaked such extensive damage on the ecology. This has resulted into an intense detachment from our surroundings as well as the loss of the sense of interconnectedness with our surroundings; thus the plundering of Nature which results in ecological crisis. It is as a result of this that a growing number of writers have risen to the occasion, and are now aware of the need for new stories. For according to Thomas Berry, "we are in trouble because we do not have a good story". This study reveals that Soyinka is one of such writers who have tried to restructure our story. Using his society as a microcosm of the crucial interactions between socio-economic

factors and major ecological problems, the need to protect Nature which forms the basis of most of his works is clear. In line with this fact therefore, the values of his writings extend beyond the boundaries of his society to include the whole world.

Although the play texts *A Dance of the Forests* and *The Beatification of an Area Boy* have different settings and contexts (the former has its setting in the forest, what people will refer to as pristine wilderness, while the latter has its setting in the city), there are commonalities between the two plays. This study sees the latter as a continuum of the effects of a bad relationship with Nature. In the end both play texts conceive of the violence practiced against ecology as a grave offence, not only because of its degradation of the earth, but because of its subsequent enslavement and reckless destruction of human communities. The connections they establish between Nature and culture have prompted this study to examine them from an ecocritical perspective.

A study of Soyinka's plays reveals that the origin of our ecological problems lies in our relationship with Nature the failure of man to understand the fact that the earth is an organic system in which everyone must play their part. His writings are driven by a deep moral concern about the ecological degradation that has pervaded the entire society. Soyinka's wisdom has done much to help solve them. In fact, his foresight is truly remarkable. He produced most of his works years before the current ecological problems created by the enormous expansion of industrialization, and by an orgy of consumption had become acute. As at the time Soyinka wrote some of his plays, he may not have been aware that he was anticipating this moment by setting down a morality tale that will be so applicable to the current circumstances of the continent. Today, man is faced with ecological problems that are far more ominous than when he started writing; as parts of Nature have become permanently marred by the destructive extraction

of natural resources far beyond the necessary. Man's perceptions of the world to a large extent, influence the culture of a people. It determines the value attached to everything: both animate and inanimate. Humans have a choice to either create their own cultural values that could enhance productivity as well as peaceful co-existence with their surrounds, or create values that threaten and destroy man. Most of Soyinka's plays demonstrate the salient connections between conceptualizations and the patterns of human activities and cultural structures which are represented by social, political and ecological processes. This study tried to explain the relevance these findings have for the global ecological predicament as well as other social problems. Soyinka makes a connection between human attitudes and environmental conditions and the need for humans to re-orient themselves towards the earth.

In trying to restructure "our" story, Soyinka constructs most of his plays to fall under the general theme of the co-existence between man and Nature. Soyinka puts words of wisdom into the mouths of non-human characters in some of his plays, and therefore it is easy for the human and the natural world to comment on each other. The two plays attribute social injustice and economic deprivation to ecological deterioration and employ interrelated strategies to sustain ecology and boost readers' awareness of future destructive results, if the current trajectory of ecological exploitation persists. Thus, Soyinka's works contain a number of ecological themes, in other words, essentials that agree with modern ecological thoughts. For instance, the appeal for the respect and acknowledgement for elements of Nature can be deduced from most of his plays. Other aspects that can be gleaned include the intricate connection between man and Nature, as well as the exposition of the kinship between the two. Above all, Soyinka's plays reveal that violence against Nature leads to grave consequences. These themes promote habits of thoughts and practices conducive to ecological/environmental protection.

Soyinka's early plays like *A Dance of the Forest*, reflect a concept of Nature that enables us to understand what the term (Nature) really means. Furthermore, his concept guides us in determining our attitude and conduct to nature. However, his relatively recent plays (plays of the late eighties and early nineties) clearly show the repercussions of violating nature's laws with impunity. It is evident that Nature is influenced by the beliefs and activities of humans (in other words the culture of people) and this position implies that Nature can be influenced for good or for bad by people's culture. In recent times, scientific progress and technological development are perhaps the most important factors continuously influencing the socio-cultural environment and changes. This destruction of Nature imposes a concern for the care of Nature by humans. For instance within a few decades, Africans have created a systemic culture of consumption and now have embarked on a wasteful style of living. The economic policies are changing rapidly and more importantly maintaining the mechanisms of a particular worldview that is not friendly with the eco-system. In Nigeria for instance, many state enterprises have now been privatized, and the government is thinking of embarking on the deregulation of the fuel sector in spite of the current environment challenges. These changes in policies only introduce new sets of values which affect people every day. Consequently, Soyinka's recent plays show aspects of the modern world and modern mentality which is marked by metaphysics of progress through an unmitigated aggression against Nature so much so that every step of progress is measured by how extensively man has altered Nature. This outlook usually causes as many problems as it solves. It produces a society full of crimes and corruption as found in *Kongi's Harvest, The Beatification of an Area Boy, The Swamp Dwellers* amongst others.

This study adds to the body of knowledge by bringing to the fore, the uniqueness of Soyinka's thoughts as it concerns ecology. Although several other African writers have

concerned themselves with addressing contemporary issues, this appears to be a temporary emergency treatment to the myriad ecological problems on ground. A study of some of their works reveals that they regard environmental protection as a new challenge that calls for new approaches and new conceptual tools. By contrast, Soyinka takes a step deeper in order to tackle these ecological problems by devising feasible substitutions to the detrimental pressures of modernity and all its trappings (colonialism, imperialism, capitalism amongst others). He resorts to constructive mythologies and traditional practices which readjust human relationship not just with ecology but with one another as well. Furthermore, Soyinka believes that our cultural heritage is pervaded with sufficient knowledge and wisdom required to sustain the environment. In order to correct the current exploitative and materialist outlook of modern culture (which is global now), we would do better to look inwards. To look into ancient wisdom and ways of being, as most of our traditions contain various types of provisions for respecting the natural environment, wild life and even fellow humans. This is seen in the form of sanctions contained in various folktales and taboos.

Through Soyinka's philosophical works and literary texts, we can deduce a promotion of a more ecological sense of self. There should be an understanding of the interconnectivity of all life forms. A more pragmatic awareness of the self as an ecological entity will lead to the belief that care for Nature and the environment is the same as care for the self. This is why this study considers Soyinka's works suitable for the research. Soyinka looked inwards for the principles and values that are needed to recover this ecological sense of self. It can be inferred from his works that the African heritage offers the cultural, intellectual and philosophical basis for overcoming the devastating effects of modern mentality. The African heritage as portrayed in Soyinka's works is not only at par with ecological principles, but it is also known for its non-

materialistic policies. In other words, reality in the African philosophy goes beyond physical objects and the fundamental interaction that exists between them. African philosophical worldview acknowledges the non-physical and immaterial things. This explains why there is always juxtaposition between traditional values and modern values in most of Soyinka's plays, with him always favouring the former over the latter; for the materialist outlook is consistent with the modern worldview which, combined with a strong sense of Self over Others, results in an egoistic drive towards the acquisition of material goods and ultimately, self destruction. It is evident that we are today witnessing the extent to which industrial societies suffer environmental problems. If adequate attention is not paid to the environment by reinforcing the culture of respect for it, the future of such environments will be truly regrettable. Thus in all planning efforts, traditional ethics, wisdom and values cannot be neglected without sustaining a series of avoidable, social disorder and instability.

Favouring traditional values over the modern is not a call to re-live the past exactly as it was, but a call to learn from it. This is what Soyinka pushes for. Applying traditional values to all aspects of our decision making and policies may sound implausible; especially when associating science and technology with culture. In Maitama's words, "science on its own is a valueless, technical study of matter and no more". Thus the study of science provides one with knowledge which can be applied to suit the context of our cultures. In other words, the worth of science lies not in the study of science itself but in the manner in which it can be utilized. The West for instance, is preoccupied with global dominance and as such has developed a culture of unprovoked aggression with scientific knowledge, for which they are using to suit their obsessions. All manner of nuclear weapons that can put an end to human existence and agricultural productions are being produced on a daily basis. Although following the cultural

patterns of the West; especially in the field of science enhances quality and precision, the implications of slavish copying without recourse to our own traditions will have a far reaching negative impact on our moral values, culture and tradition. The role of Literature therefore comes to the fore in promoting cultural values.

The role of Literature in all of these cannot be overemphasized. One of the functions of Literature is to increase awareness and receptiveness in an attempt to create cases for renaissance and revival Through Literature, readers can gain a complex understanding of Nature. African Literature specifically is a storehouse of ecological knowledge. This knowledge is substantially left out of current efforts that seek to address the issues of the problems of the ecology. Soyinka for instance, calls on African writers to prove that they have a vision. The writer should be a liberator of some sort as he possesses a vision not clear to the lay man as such; it is his duty to guide his/her society towards a beautiful future. Soyinka has done what Diamonds (2005) refers to as "the courage to practice long term thinking". However, he does this by looking into the past and future. His recourse to history; although not an uncritical recourse, has much to teach his readers about where they went wrong, what has worked for them, what is working for them and why things have developed the way they did, especially in the social, political and ecological processes. Shunning this procedure denies a people of their existence. From Soyinka's works one can glean that although African tradition is not perfect; it is humanistic, as it is in harmony with Nature. Learning from the past is indeed invaluable to the future. This is seen in his worldview which emerges clearly from his collection of writings, as he uses the past to clarify the present.

Such sentiments as mentioned above can prompt critics to regard such ways of thinking as anti-progress or anti-science due to the overt or covert critique of modern culture which many

nations have imbibed. Although people like Soyinka often challenge the prevailing assumptions about progress, he is not an agent of anti-development; even though his thoughts are undeniably in conflict with the primacy accorded to the material and economic notion of progress. For him, the idea of progress should not be separated from the moral, ecological, social, the economic and the scientific. Soyinka advocates for a culture that is mindful of sustainability, bio-diversity and suited to local environmental social conditions while choosing indicators of progress that more accurately, reflect the well being of man and the ecological system. Furthermore, he advocates for a culture that is built on indigenous circumstances and requirements which by extension will affect all aspects of the decision making and policies; thus science and technology must be in alliance with our cultural settings.

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