



An Ecocritical Reading of Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*

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Abstract— *Ecocriticism can be defined as a pro-environmental perspective that critically examines the production of nature and the politics that underpin its development. It promotes the idea that how nature is treated and nurtured and how she is becoming a part of current environmental discourses will be mirrored in cultural objects. The schoolteacher Lacunle's aversive attitude about paying the cash meant for the possession of the bride in Soyinka's The Lion, and the Jewel is a reflection of how 'nature' is conceptually assimilated within Western thought; in this context, Sidi, the local girl, is the bride whom Lacunle woos. Sidi can also be seen in contrast to the natural world. Imperialist forces always saw the locals as a part of nature — uneducated and unrefined primal savages who were supposed to be civilized by European norms. Sidi, who was always ready to take pride in her originality, found the same act of shouldering the 'European load' undertaken by Lacunle and his persuasions to conform to the behavioural norms of modernity to be a dreadful thing. In short, the Ecocritical perspective on the play is realized in this article at the levels of Ecofeminism, Deep Ecology, and Eco Spiritualism.*

Keywords— *Ecocriticism, Ecofeminism, Deep Ecology, Eco Spiritualism, Yoruba community.*

INTRODUCTION

Conceptually, Eco Criticism supports the belief that how nature is treated and nurtured and how she is becoming a part of current environmental discourses will be mirrored in cultural objects. The schoolteacher Lacunle's aversion to paying the cash meant for the bride's possession in Soyinka's *The Lion, and the Jewel* reflects how 'nature' is conceptually assimilated inside Western thought; here, Sidi, the local girl, is the bride whom Lacunle woos. The views of nature held by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke were influential in developing Western ideas about nature: the former ascribed primitive values to it. At the same time, the latter regarded it as private property.

MAJOR ECO CRITICAL UNDERCURRENTS RUNNING THROUGH THE MATRIX OF THE PLAY

Sidi's alternate title was "Jewel," which spoke to the idea of a most intimate material object. When anything is

reduced to property status, the intrinsic values are frequently overlooked because property connotes something that is merely material and devoid of soul. Consider Lacunle and Sidi's exchange: Lacunle: 'You could wear something. The majority of women do'. Sidi's natural manners, modest dress, and attitude toward life and culture did not coincide with Lacunle. "This is too much," Sidi expresses her displeasure.

In England and Europe, the 'improvement' idea held that you could improve yourself by improving nature. This progress is inextricably linked to civilization. According to Enlightenment theorists like Jean Jacques Rousseau, who thought that the condition of nature was the purest and best form of human existence, civilization is "artificial" and "corrupt." Herein lays the reason for Sidi's attempt to break free from Lacunle's civilizational norms.

Furthermore, Lacan's concept of 'high love' seemed absurd to Sidi's ears:

Sidi: If you start doing that, I'll flee. That nonsense was enough for me the other day.

Lacunae: I've been squandered! Wasted! My heart, Sidi

With my affection, it bursts into blooms.

However, you and the village's dead

With the feet of ignorance, trample in.

Lacunle was going against the grain: he believed that native culture would inevitably be replaced by modernization. On the other hand, Sidi was unwilling to give up the bride's money that Lacunle was due to pay.

Sidi: They'll say I'm not a virgin.

That I was compelled to sell my humiliation

And I'll marry you for free.

"VIRGINITY" distinguishes out for its exquisite quality. Nature was unable to separate itself from the culture's immaculate values.

The Yoruba culture of Nigeria has become an important aspect of African theatre studies. The Yoruba culture might be contrasted with Bale, the Illujile lion. Sadiku, Bale's most senior wife, notifies her that the Lion (Baroka) intends to marry her. She would be able to become the first, and thus head wife, of Baroka's successor, in the same way as Sadiku was Baroka's head wife. On the other hand, Sidi sees right through her lies and informs her that all he desired was a reputation "as the one man who has had 'the diamond of Ilujinle'."

Within Sidi, the Jewel, and Bale, the Lion, the concept of feminine nature and masculine culture, which comprises the two sides of gendered values, is reflected. The male culture, like Bale's, is objective and rational, whereas nature, like Sidi's, is subjective and emotional. Culture roars in the open like a Lion, while nature stays the most secluded, like a Jewel. When Sidi sees the magazine, she remarks that she looks stunning in the photo, whereas he appears to be a ragged, charred piece of saddle leather: she is young, but he is old. Sadiku switches tactics, asking whether Sidi would be willing to attend a little feast in her honour at his house that night if she does not want to be his wife. Sidi refuses, claiming that she is well aware that every woman who has eaten supper with him eventually marries him.

According to Deep Ecology, humans must maintain an emotional link with nature—not just an intellectual one—to understand its actual merits. Lacunle was attempting to distance himself from the intrinsic: he opposed culture and nature, or rather, Sidi, who upheld inherent values, could not support him.

Lacunle interjects, telling them that Baroka was famed for his cunning, especially when he foiled the Public Works Department's plan to build a train through Ilujinle. Because "the earth is most unsuitable, could not possibly hold the weight of a railway engine," Baroka bribed the surveyor for the route to shift the railroad considerably farther away. Lakunle is disturbed by the fact that Ilujinle was so close to civilization at the time.

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Eco-feminist spirituality has also advanced the concept that indigenous or pre-modern civilizations have always respected nature and valued women's knowledge, such as the Bale. As a result, it reconciles religion and spiritualism. Bale defends native culture in this scene, and Sidi is unable to take a different stance than Lacunle.

Furthermore, the play's separation into dawn, noon, and night add to the genre's link to nature. It reminds me of Northrop Frye's archetypal split.

CONCLUSION

The Yoruba culture of Nigeria has become an important aspect of African theatre studies. The Yoruba culture might be contrasted with Bale, the Ilunjile lion. Within Sidi and Jewel, the concept of feminine nature and male culture, which comprises the two sides of gendered values, is reflected. The male culture, like Bale's, is objective and rational, whereas nature, like Sidi's, is subjective and emotional. Culture roars in the open like a Lion, while nature stays the most secluded, like a Jewel. According to Deep Ecology, humans must maintain an emotional link with nature—not just an intellectual one—to understand its actual merits. Lacunle was attempting to distance himself from the intrinsic: he defied society, and as a result, nature was unable to support him. The Ecofeminist spirituality also makes the case that native or pre-modern societies have always treated nature with respect and valued women's knowledge; in this case, Bale defends the original culture, while Sidi cannot adopt a different stance than Lacunle.

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