



Allusions in Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* and *Kongi's Harvest*

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Abstract— This study deals with Wole Soyinka's two plays, *A Dance of the Forests* and *Kongi's Harvest* with the aim is to show the use of allusions in the depiction of the glory and the decline of the African past. The two plays, from the same literary tradition enables us to explore Nigerian viewpoints of ancient and recent history. By appropriating the discussions of Gerard Genette, Michael Leddy, William Irwin, John Campbell and Allan Pasco on the use of allusion in literature, we argue that when the author refers to history in his works, he employs allusions to affirm or oppose certain notions. Wole Soyinka alludes to history to affirm the the glory of the African past and also to oppose to some of the other facts that prove the collapse of the African empires. Both plays implicitly utilise the glory and the collapse of African empires but each one employs these incidents according to the viewpoint and cultural background of its author. Hence, the different employment of history reveals contestations of worldviews which are symptomatic of the ideological clashes between the Africans among themselves, and the Europeans.

Keywords— Nigeria, African past, allusion, affirmation, opposition, glory, decline.

I. INTRODUCTION

This study is motivated by the Africans attitude of exalting their past alone through allusion. We intend to show the use of allusion in the depiction of this incident in Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* (1973) and *Kongi's Harvest* (1974). These two plays are analysed while exploring how history is implicitly refered so as to affirm or to oppose certain notions. The framework of the analysis is an appropriation of the discussions of Gerard Genette (1997), Michael Leddy (1992), William Irwin (2001), John Campbell (1994) and Allan Pasco (2002) who have theorised about allusion in literature. In fact, its treatment in fiction is divided into two types: affirmative and oppositional allusion which are extensively explained further. According to Kristeva (1980, p.66), "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another". It means that texts interact with one another. Just like Kristeva, Barthes (1977, p.148) argues that any productive "text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations..." Therefore, writers, deliberately or

otherwise, are influenced by past works. For some writers, the influence can be clearly traced; for others, hint of the past may be less discernable. The appropriation of historical events is a form of intertextuality practised by many writers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Drama and theatre are designed to acquaint readers, listeners and spectators with what is happening in the world. It is logical that they are rapidly changing and constantly evolving field, both from the point of view of the content and structure. Drama conveys the author's message. To this effect, it is a discourse, and discourse studies have been quite extensive in recent decades. They remain more based on literary genres such as poems, short stories, novels, and drama. These genres are considered the vast fields for research, both from the point of view of text structures, its content and formal features, not the least of which are the figures of speech, in particular, allusion. The interpretation proposed by B. M. Gasparov (1996, pp. 251-259) considers discourse as a linguistic coexistence, in which it is necessary

to consider the communicative intentions of the author, the relationship of the author and recipients, various significant and accidental circumstances, genre and stylistic features, as the communication and the communicative situation in which it is included, a lot of associations with previous experiences.

To speak about dramatic discourse or style, it has a number of aspects that define it: 1) the functional aspect performs: a) informative functions, b) the formation of public opinion, c) entertaining functions; 2) the referential aspect speaks that drama are designed to the readers and highlight all areas of activities (society, politics); The main characteristics of microsystems of drama are brief stories in dialogue, materials pertaining to the fields such as society and politics (Galperin, 1981, pp. 224-236). Intertextual elements are those sited within the intertextual theory. Most scientists agree that "dealing with intertextuality, it is quite normal to start with Kristeva ... with reference to what Bakhtin calls the dialogic aspect of language" (Haberer, 2007, pp. 56-57). There are many interpretations of the term "intertextuality" (Moskvin, 2013, pp. 54-61), but at its essence intertextuality is either the "absorption or transformation of another text" (Kristeva, 1969, p. 146), and it is connected with either the mixture of statements and texts, or the derivation of one text from another" (Jasinski, 2001, p. 322). In an attempt to distinguish the term "intertextuality" in his work "Intertextuality: the categorical apparatus and typology", V. P. Moskvin (2014) writes: "...many authors understand intertextuality as a literary device, as trope or a stylistic figure, a method for construction of a literary text; however, intertextuality is not a reception, and the associative base for methods of citation of an application, allusion, paraphrase and other shapes of the intertext, which do not always become ambiguous, and therefore neither one of the interpretations of the path are incompatible" (Moskvin, 2013, p. 54). So an allusion is understood as one of the mostly frequently used intertextual element. Many Russian linguists consider an allusion as a stylistic figure that contains either a citation, or a reference to a literary, historical, mythological, religious or political situation, a fact, a person, fixed in written sources or in conversational speech. Any piece of intertext, in particular an allusion can rely either on: 1) preceding in relation to the perceived so called "left" text, or 2) other text, i.e. pre-text (Moskvin, 2013).

According to I. S. Khristenko (1992, p. 43), an allusion is a type of parody which does not imply the stylistic means of the original source and does not seek for destroying the aesthetic value of the works parodied; it is a paraphrase of the text, which sets out the initial "high" the text "low" style.

A slightly different interpretation is proposed by B. M. Gasparov (1996, p. 39), according to whom allusion is borrowing only certain elements of the pretext, and the whole statement or string pretext, correlated with the new text, present in the last implicit.

Thus, to understand allusively text, the recipient needs to have certain background knowledge. In background knowledge of the addressee should include knowledge about the main signs of allusion; otherwise, he will not be able to achieve adequate decoding. In this regard, J. Genet (1998, p. 216-217) says about the two types of the addressee: the addressee for whom an allusive aspect of the text has a zero value and the addressee for which pretext is a significant precedent].

As pointed out by E.V. Grudeva, the headlines and the texts themselves use a wide variety of literary allusions: 1) literature citations-reminiscentii, titles of works, names of characters, 2) modified statements of scientists, politicians, cultural figures, 3) Sola Intertextual elements are those which could be sited within the intertextual theory. Most scientists agree that "dealing with intertextuality, it is quite normal to start with Kristeva ... with reference to what Bakhtin calls the dialogic aspect of language" (Haberer, 2007, pp. 56-57).

A few common categories of allusion follow: nominal allusions, literary allusions, verbal allusions, mythological allusions, religious allusions and historical allusions. In this work we are concerned with the historical allusion.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of intertextuality, which was coined by Kristeva and disseminated by Barthes, has invoked other theorists and critics to shed light on a number of its mechanisms and allusion seems to be the most complicated one. Michael Leddy (1992, p.112) defines "allusion" as "words [which] typically describe a reference that invokes one or more associations of appropriate cultural material and brings them to bear upon a present context." These "words" have double meanings, overt and covert. The former explicitly deals with the obvious "context", and the latter is ambiguous for it refers to the "associations" that allude to elements outside the text. Similarly, Gérard Genette (1997, p.2) relates "allusion" to "an enunciation whose full meaning presupposes the perception of a relationship between it and another text, to which it necessarily refers by some infections that would otherwise remain unintelligible." This "enunciation" can be a word, a phrase, a sentence or maybe a complete paragraph. In fact, Genette's perception of allusion is similar to Leddy's which has been discussed earlier. He merely elaborates that knowing the "infections" of the old text on the new text can

assist a reader's understanding. However, William Irwin (2001, p.288) criticises Leddy's use of the word "typical" and claims that the "additional associations are more than just typical; they are necessary for correct and complete understanding." Hence, according to Irwin, the "allusion" is: A reference that is indirect in the sense that it calls for associations that go beyond mere substitution of a referent. Allusions often draw on information not readily available to every member of a cultural and linguistic community, are typically but not necessarily brief, and may or may not be literary in nature. (Irwin, 2001, p.289). As illustrated above, the reader's interference is needed to complete his/her understanding of the text. This coincides with John Campbell (1994, p.19) who argues that "allusions invite us to select from our mental library, knowledge which is not in the text itself and without which the writer's intention will not be fully communicated." Yet, the role of the reader can distort the meaning of the text particularly if the reader is subjective or biased. Therefore, although Irwin (2001, p.293) "cannot deny that the reader must play a vital role in his or her own understanding of an allusion", he insists that the reader's "understanding" "must be in accordance with the author's intent." In other words, when readers claim that a particular text alludes to another, evidences must be provided and proved. This leads Allan Pasco (2002, p.10) to explain that "when allusion is unnoticed or misunderstood, the blame should fall on readers rather than on writers and their occasional use of covert allusion." Hence, readers must be aware of the double meaning used in texts to understand them very well. Though many discussions have been done on allusion, only a few of them have emphasised on its types. According to Pasco (2002, p.110), there are "parallel and oppositional allusions." The former refers to key-words which writers use in their texts to affirm certain notions that "parallel" a pre-existed text. Henceforth, we will call this type "affirmative allusion". The word "affirmative" is derived from the strategy of "affirmation" which David Spurr (1993, p.110) defines as "the rhetorical gesture in which the subject actually constitutes itself through repetition". This "repetition" normally affirms a certain idea that corroborates the author's perspective. Affirmative allusion can also be achieved through parallelism. Writers can show a parallel or harmony between two events, symbols, or notions to affirm that both are interrelated. However, affirmative allusion becomes dangerous when it exceeds the views and ideas into fixing stereotypes. In contrast, the latter refers to the allusions where texts implicitly counter and oppose one another. According to Pasco (1994, p.103), "an allusion of opposition may weight parallels as a means of preparing a contrasting conclusion." In other words, text B can employ some elements of text A

in order to expose an "opposition" or a refusal of its contents. Pasco (1994, p.98) argues that "allusion of opposition has been virtually ignored ... [because] allusions of opposition present particular difficulties, however, for their ironies and paradoxes usually bring nuances of extraordinary complexity to bear on some aspect of the created world." Based on this argument, we can claim that oppositional allusions occur through the use of "ironies and paradoxes". However, the affirmative and oppositional allusions converge in their "formation of metaphorical relationship where the reference and referent come together to create something different from either" (Pasco, 2002, p.98). Both types of allusion will form the theoretical framework of our analysis of the two plays. We show how the two authors' allusions to history reveal an affirmation or opposition to certain notions.

IV. AFFIRMATIVE ALLUSION

Historical allusions is used in works of literature to refer to events and people in a way that makes the events or characters of a work more relatable. Historical allusions often depend on the writer or speaker understanding of his or her audience.

In its allusion to the glory of African past, and the collapse of African empires and ill-practices in Africa, Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* (1973) employs repetitions to affirm that African leaders made African empires great in the past and women participated actively and positively in trade and agriculture; they fulfill important political roles in chiefship; they hold other leadership positions, even in the nationalist movements. Before analysing instances from the text that show how the idea above is repeated, we will briefly highlight the plot of the play. The story centres on the celebration of feast: "the gathering of the tribes" (*A Dance of the Forests* p. 5) including the living people, the dead people, the supernatural beings, the half child, the unborn, etc. Participants to the feast belong to different and opposed worlds, generations, etc. ensuing conflicts leading to the birth of the Half-Child, the death of Oremole who was pushed down from a tree by Demoke, the protagonist, and the struggle between Ogun and Eshuoro.

To begin with the terms "Mali. Chaka- Songhai – Glory- Empires" (p. 11), "Mali - Songhai. Lisabi - Chaka", they are used in *A Dance of the Forests* as an historical allusion to the glory of the African past. They are closed to the action of the play, centered on the "Gathering of the Tribes," a grand assemblage of a people in the festive circumstance – not too difficult to discern as an "Independence Day" – type celebration. In addition, this is the occasion for the nation to recall historic heroism of the sort that will inspire them for the future. The phrase historic

heroism exclusively refers to the category of people that make the glory so talked about. In this regards, the play describes their need as follows:

We must bring home the descendants of our great forebear. Find them. Find the scattered sons of our proud ancestors. The builders of empires. The descendants of our great nobility. Find them here. If they are halfway across the world, trace them. Bring them here. If they are in hell, ransom them. Let them symbolize all that is noble in our nation of rejoicing. Warriors. Sages. Conquerors. Builders. Philosophers. Mystics. Let us assemble them around the totem of the nation and we will drink from their resurrected glory (Soyinka, 1973, p. 31).

The passage above from the play emphasizes the remembrance, resurrection and the need for builders of empires mentioned in the historic allusion under consideration. To elaborate a bit more on each of them, the Mali Empire dated from the early thirteenth century to the late fifteenth century. The empire was founded by Sundiata Keita, and became renowned for the wealth of its rulers. The Mali Empire had many profound cultural influences on West Africa, allowing the spread of its language, laws and customs along the Niger River. As far as Songhai is concerned, it had asserted its own independence over Mali's power, and had risen to power in the area. Songhai has been an important trade center within Mali's empire. Great Songhai kings such as Sunni Ali Ber and Askia Mohammed Toure had extended the Songhai kingdom farther than Ghana or Mali. It was the largest and most powerful kingdom in medieval West African. The riches of gold and salt mines drew invaders. As for the Chaka Empire, it resulted from the transformation of the zulu tribe, a small clan into the beginnings of a nation that held a way over the large portion of Southern Africa. Its leader was Shaka Zulu c. 1787- c. 22 September 1828. His military prowess and destructiveness have been widely studied. One *Encyclopaedia Britannica's* article asserts that he was something of a genius for his reforms and innovations. His statesmanship and vigour in assimilating some neighbours and ruling by proxy marks him as one of the greatest of the Zulu chieftains.

The historic facts mentioned above, and in relation to the glory of the African past cannot be subjected to any doubt. The problem is that, limiting the allusion to only these positive facts would be detrimental to the complete knowledge of the history of these empires. The reason for this is that, apart from all that is positive and tells the rise of these empires, there are other facts that prove the collapse,

fall of the same empires. To be clear, Mali and Songhai are the two medieval kingdoms of West Africa that collapsed for similar reasons despite their greatness. Risen under the legendary king named Sundiata, the small states it had conquered broke off, and the Mali Empire crumbled after Sundiata's death because his son could not hold the empire together. Political violence is depicted through the story from the play when we consider the reason that caused the decline of the empires. In fact, as for the Songhai Empire, in the late sixteenth century a Moroccan army attacked the capital, and the Songhai Empire already weakened by internal political struggles, went into decline. To this respect, we write that Demoke, Rola and Adenebi, all, characters in *A Dance of the Forests* should not reduce the history of the country to positive events, happenings, etc. alone. The telling and the writing of the country's history must take into account all the events, be them positive or/and negative.

The concept history means a story about the past that is significant and true. In addition, the goal of history is to tell a story about the past which captures the essence of an event while omitting superfluous details, and the past being fixed – no one can change what happened. Most historians use the word "true" to mean any perspective well supported by facts. A history that is true and significant is important because it helps people to understand who they are. In this regards, it is evident that people who control the past control the future. Their view of history shapes the way they view the present, and therefore, it dictates answers they offer for existing problems. Wole Soyinka actually releases on history. That is why in the so-important historical section of *A Dance of the Forests*, he calls for an evocation of the truth of the past which is quite different from the Old Man, Adenebi, Rola, and Demoke's proposal for the invitation of attendants to "Gathering of the Tribes" through their limited approach to the understanding of their histories. Our literary sensibility makes us consider that Wole Soyinka's allusion to this historical reality fulfils the function of clearly pushing for an understanding of the histories that are less illustrious. The fact of acknowledging only the histories that are glorious but falling to realize the stories that are less honorable even shameful, the society is harming itself by repeating past mistakes.

Furthermore, in the line that represents time, the historic allusion about the glorious empires under investigation is placed within the pre-colonial period. To this respect, Wole Soyinka through the text of course, reveals the complexity of Africa's pre-colonial conditions. These conditions contributed to the fragmentation of African society. As we have mentioned it above, the characters concerned are Rola, Demoke and Adenebi. Through them it seems clear that we see the problems of

history making manifest at the moment of independence. Wole Soyinka expresses the kind of relations he wishes to draw between the old and the new. What he understands and reveals is that, the arrival of European colonialists in the African continent only exacerbated the problem of nation. In this regards, Soyinka counter argues Fanon (2004, p. 2) assertion that is "decolonization is truly the creation of new men" when he thinks that decolonization only reveals the same men. In addition, the process of the independence struggle had already thrown up ominous signs of inequities that would detribalize a newly freed entity – a familiar tendency toward self – attrition, once the external enemy is gone. We mean, that history was that of African's culpability in the enslavement of her own kind.

Above all, the essential is that there are two different ways of understanding the past of Africa. The characters in the play express themselves freely through their historic allusion to great empires to mean that the past of Africa is glorious. Those characters are only Soyinka's literary creations. They stand for the people who embody this thinking. Wole Soyinka sees in this, a very limited understanding of the reality. He considers that, African past is a sadly inglorious one. Furthermore, the historic allusion to Mali. Chaka - Songhai – Glory- Empires" (p. 11), "Mali - Songhai. Lisabi - Chaka" from *A Dance of the Forests* does not make a restriction as far as the aspect of place is concerned. It goes beyond Nigeria and embraces the whole black nation. The concept "gathering of the tribes" is used to cover all the "Warriors. Sages. Conquerors. Builders. Philosophers. Mystics" from as far back into the black race as possible.

The next historical allusion is 'Saro women'. Wole Soyinka alludes to them to focus on East and southern Africa, tracing women's history from earliest times to the present. In addition, this allusion is an exploration of women's place in social, economic, political, and religious life. It highlights the changing societal position of women through shifts over time in ideas about gender and the connections between women's public and private spheres. This seems evident that Soyinka's direct allusion to 'Saro women' is also an examination of the status and activities of women in West and Central Africa, from the earliest periods through the rise of various kingdoms and states, to the establishment of colonies and independent nations. Wole Soyinka through the historical allusion under consideration looks at women's participation in trade, including the slave trade, and agriculture; women's political roles in chiefship, other leadership positions, and nationalist movements; and the current constraints under which women function.

V. OPPOSITIONAL ALLUSION

In his allusion to the scene of people who reveal the existence of slavery in Africa before Britain and other European powers arrived; the Songhai Empire weakened by internal political struggles; the immoral and inhuman actions of African kings who, for their own sentimental concerns mobilizes the kingdom army to fight a war; the current constraints under which women function in East and southern Africa; women's participation in the slave trade; the dictatorial regimes in Africa, Soyinka ironically opposes to the glory of the African past alone.

We see that the imagery moves even beyond the black race. In fact, in the court of Mata Kharibu the Court Historian proudly cites the Trojan War fought as a justification of the tyrant's capricious war over Madame Tortoise. The play writes that Mata Kharibu has stolen the woman of another man. He decides that the slighted man must return her wardrobe to her. When he refuses, Mata Kharibu declares war. Descriptions of the Trojan War would likely act as an historical allusion to the battle between the people of Greece and the people of the city of Troy. Prince Paris of Troy abducted the wife of Menelaus of Sparta (Helen), and refused to return her. Then, Agamemnon, brother of Menelaus, gathered troops to attack the Trojans. The battle raged nine years, and although the Greeks destroyed Trojan territory.

At this level, through the historical allusion to the Trojan War, Wole Soyinka reveals and satirizes the immoral and inhuman actions of African kings who, for their own sentimental concerns mobilizes the kingdom army to fight a war. How a king can abduct a wife of another man. The other aspect that Wole Soyinka denounces is such a negative freedom that a king enjoy to do whatever he wants. Soyinka sees that African kings enjoy absolute divine right. In this respect, Soyinka suggests the principle of the rule of law, constitutionalism and democracy.

Furthermore, the common noun "slave" and the character's name "Slave Dealer" are historical allusions to slavery, that is also the slave trade. In *A Dance of the Forests*, the event in which we read descriptions of this inhuman practice is linked to the historical section. In fact, the slave trade in the play begins when the Warrior refuses to fight Mata Kharibu's unjust war. This decision from the soldier that he does not want to serve an unjust master leads Mata Kharibu to see him as a possible danger because the germ of freedom may contaminate the other soldiers loyal to him. As a consequence, the Warrior is castrated and sold as a slave.

The reading of the play reveals that this happened before the colonial period. To this respect, through this historical allusion Wole Soyinka reveals the existence of slavery in

Africa before Britain and other European powers arrived. In the above – mentioned so-called African glorious empires: Mali, Songhai and Soudan rulers had thousands of slaves who worked as servants, soldiers and farm workers. There existed such a cooperation between villages in the matter of providing captives not to sell, but for local use. In 1400s, however, the British and the other Europeans introduced a new form of slavery that devastated African life and society. The displaced African people to the Caribbean are double victims of that devastation.

Furthermore, the name “Badagry” is also a historical allusion to the infamous Atlantic slave trade in Africa. In fact, “Badagry” was an important slave route in West Africa. In the early 1500’ s, slave were transported from West Africa to America through Badagry. It is reported that Badagry exported no fewer than 550, 000 African slaves to America during the period of American Independence in 1787. European slave buyers made the greater profit from the despicable trade, but their Nigerian partners also prospered. When Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807, it not only had to content with opposition from white slavers but also from Nigerian rulers who had become accustomed to wealth gained from selling slaves or from taxes collected on slaves passed through their domain. The slave trade business continued in many parts of Africa for many decades after the British abolished it. A part from this action, *A Dance of the Forests* writes about a new form of slave trade in Africa. In fact, we refer to the Physician’s complain about that the Slave-Dealer’s ship is too small to carry the condemned Warrior and his sixty men. The dealer assures that he now has a new vessel capable, when time comes, of transporting the whole of Mata Kharibu’s court to hell.

Reading through this part of the play reveals Wole Soyinka’s suggestion that the ‘new’ ship in which Mata Kharibu and all his ancestors would be proud to ride represents modern form of slavery that African leaders are blindly accepting.

Then, ‘Nazi salut’ and ‘Field Marshal’ from Wole Soyinka’s *Kongi’s Harvest* are historical allusions to dictatorial regimes in Africa. To begin with ‘Field Marshal’, *Webster Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1971) defines it as ‘a military officer of the highest rank, as in the French and some other armies’. Additionally, it defines the concept ‘nazi’ as a member of the National Socialist German Workers’ party of Germany, which in 1933, under Adolf Hitler, seized political control of the country, suppressing all opposition and establishing a dictatorship over all cultural, economic, and political activities of the people, and promulgate belief in the supremacy of Hitler as Führer, anti-Semitism, the natural

supremacy of the German people, and the establishment of Germany by superior force as a dominant world power.

In the above definitions of the historical allusions ‘Field Marshal’ and ‘nazi’, the sound idea is the use of military force alone as a principle of governance, and its consequences such as authoritarian regime or dictatorship, violation of fundamental rights (freedom of speech, freedom of association and of political formations, etc.), long for absolute power, modification of national constitution, running election and re-election without real opposition, mismanagement of public funds; poverty, starvation for the other people, execution of leaders in opposition, etc.: lack of democracy.

In his *Kongi’s Harvest*, Wole Soyinka alludes directly to the historical ‘Field Marshal’ and the ‘nazi’ in order to satirize the new political leaders in Africa, and wherever in the world they are stronger than the institutions. All the relevant trappings mentioned, and that characterizes the ‘nazi’ function in Kongi’s political administration. President Kongi is concerned about the state and not individual matters, he came to power by force, and self-proclaimed president of the land of Isma, his New Regime relies on his own propaganda, he reassesses the role of communication and media, he makes a negative use of modern communication system to maintain and sustain the ruling hegemony, he defeats and detains king Danlola and his traditional groups, he instrumentalizes intellectuals for his own interests rather than the people’s benefits, he causes the reign of starvation even among workers, he promotes social rotteness, intellectual dishonesty, leader worship, he proclaims himself the Spirit of the Harvest, the Jesus of Isma, the Messiah, he carries out frequent incidents of bomb-throwing, opening fire on people, and hanging them.

Furthermore, the description the ‘Field Marshal’ and the ‘Nazi’, would likely act as an historical allusion to the significant and true events, supported by evidences in Kwame Nkrumah Ghana’s post-independence political experience, especially the political crisis of Ghana: Nkrumah’s downfall. President Kongi in Wole Soyinka’s literary work is the embodiment of dictatorship, totalitarian regime. In Africa’s past, this characterization integrates the negative actions that President Nkrumah took in Ghana. The government increased the powers of the President by passing legislations, including the Deportation Act, passed in July 1957, to merge the opposition parties into one party, called the United Party; similarly, the Emergency Power Act, passed in January 1958, to give power to the government to deal with unrest and disturbances in the country; the Preventive Detention Act of 1958 which had the effect of crippling the opposition parties. That Act was applied indiscriminately to terrorise both the people and

leaders who had no means of redress. For instance, J.B. Danquah and Obetsebi Lamptey died in detention. We think also of the referendum of 1964, following which the country was proclaimed a one-party state. Ghana under Nkrumah successfully followed the teachings of British constitutionalism and democracy based on the supremacy of the people represented by Parliament. The Ghanaians read and knew the same rule that is constitutionalism, and felt confident. As a consequence, they obtained their own independence. It seems quite evident that Nkrumah's work in the light of British democratic and constitutional practice remains a monument. But as human reason seems to be a weak and fallible guide, Nkrumah and the other political leaders had come to exercise public authority according to their own will; state and civic institutions, executive and legislative powers, had had their source not in the constitution but in their own will. That may also mean that Nkrumah's government had become a government of men, not of law. In short, Nkrumah had abandoned his initial parliamentary government. He had then betrayed the people. As a consequence, he was chased away just like the British had done many centuries before against their divine right absolute monarchs.

In his *Postcolonial Identity in Wole Soyinka*, especially the part devoted to 'The Banality of Postcolonial Power', Mpalive-Hangson Msiska explains that, in a typical Soyinka style, the playwright's dictator embodies the character of African autocrats in general. Kongi has Nkrumah's penchant for writing political philosophies, and aspects of his youth political organisation. As critics have noted, Soyinka's attitude to the Nkrumah legacy is too complicated to be exhausted by the singularly power-hungry Kongi. Soyinka respected Nkrumah the pan-Africanist, but he abhorred Nkrumah the dictator (Ogunba, 1975, p. 199-200).

In addition, responding to Dennis Duerden's (1972, 178-180) question on the issue, Soyinka makes his universalist intention clear:

This should not be taken to mean that [the play] is referring specifically to some Yoruba dictator, of which there is none the way at the moment, although I know at least half a dozen would – be – dictators in Nigeria, but [...] it's meant to apply to the whole trend towards dictatorship, on all sorts of spurious excuses, in the newly independent states in Africa.

From this citation, Wole Soyinka reveals the local and universal relevance of the cultural and political circumstances he deals in his *Kongi's Harvest*. This is the way to make his Yoruba audience, other ethnic and cultural

audiences to situate the play within their own immediate and wider context.

The ideal which *A Dance of the Forests*, Soyinka's independence play sets out to achieve passes through the disruption of the society's religious norms is purification. According to this outlook, this religious ceremony which consists in making pure, cleansing, would not be achieved by the palliation of guilt but by its exhumation. This is the relevance of the play-within-a play in Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*. The recurrence of man's inhumanity, futilities, and crimes are tragically exposed before an audience that becomes convicted of sin.

In relation to crimes, the action of the play about Demoke and Oremole is a good example. In fact, Demoke is a talented and different carver in the land. He is a carver in wood. He carved the totem needed for the celebration of the gathering of the tribes. He had to have cut off the araba tree, in order to carve it, but he was unable to do so himself. Oremole, a follower of Oro, and Demoke's apprentice, climbed to the top and mocked Demoke for his inability. Demoke, infuriated, pulled Oremole down and he fell to his death. Then, possessed by his god Ogun, patron god of carvers, Demoke cut the top off the tree and carved the totem. From these facts, we emphasize the following ideas: Demoke's sacrifices Oremole's life in the cause of his art and for the sake of his own pride; professional jealousy; Demoke bears the guilt for his apprentice's death; Demoke's willingness of the creation, and the destruction of both others and himself.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we assert that realities about Nigerian precolonial and postcolonial governors and ordinary people have allusively been employed in recent Nigerian fiction for affirming and opposing certain views. Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* (1973) and *Kongi's Harvest* (1974) utilise repetition and compares between his fictional characters, and pre-colonial and postcolonial political leaders and ordinary people to affirm the notion of the glory of the African past. They also employ irony to oppose the African attitude and feeling past glory alone. This means that, the glory of the African past cannot be subjected to any doubt. But, limiting the allusions to only positive facts is detrimental to the complete knowledge of the history of the African Empires. Apart from all that is positive and tells the rise of empires, there are other facts that prove the collapse, fall of the same empires. The terms 'Mali. Chaka- Songhai – Glory- Empires' (p. 11), "Mali - Songhai. Lisabi - Chaka", they are used in *A Dance of the Forests* as an historical allusion to the glory of the African past. The Mali Empire had allowed the spread of its language, laws and

customs along the Niger River. Songhai had asserted its own independence over Mali's power, and had risen to power in the area. Songhai has been an important trade center within Mali's empire. The riches of gold and salt mines drew invaders. Wole Soyinka reveals the existence of slavery in Africa before Britain and other European powers arrived. In the above – mentioned so-called African glorious empires: Mali, Songhai and Soudan rulers had thousands of slaves who worked as servants, soldiers and farm workers. Mali and Songhai are the two medieval kingdoms of West Africa that collapsed for similar reasons despite their greatness. Risen under the legendary king named Sundiata, the small states it had conquered broke off, and the Mali Empire crumbled after Sundiata's death because his son could not hold the empire together. The Songhai Empire capital was attacked by the Moroccan army in the late sixteenth century; the Songhai Empire was already weakened by internal political struggles, and went into decline. The Chaka Empire resulted from the transformation of the zulu tribe, a small clan into the beginnings of a nation that held a way over the large portion of Southern Africa. Its leader was Shaka Zulu c. 1787- c. 22 September 1828. His military prowess and destructiveness have been widely studied. Through the historical allusion 'Trojan War' Wole Soyinka reveals and satirizes the immoral and unhuman actions of African kings who, for their own sentimental concerns mobilizes the kingdom army to fight a war. The name 'Badagry' is a historical allusion to the infamous Atlantic slave trade in Africa. 'Badagry' was an important slave route in West Africa. The historical allusion 'Saro women' alludes to women's participation in trade, including the slave trade, and agriculture; women's political roles in chiefship, other leadership positions, and nationalist movements; and the current constraints under which women function in East and southern Africa. Through 'Nazi salut' and 'Field Marshal' in *Kongi's Harvest*, Wole Soyinka looks at and satirizes dictatorial regimes in Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular.

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