

Globalization and Loss: Place, Displacements and Binary in Olu Obafemi's *Wheels*

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Abstract

One of the central mantras of globalization, from the purview of the West and other self-acclaimed first world countries, is the need to take progressive and innovative ideas and thoughts to third and fourth world countries for all-round economic, political, social, and intellectual development and reinforcement. This very idea of globalization, by contrast, engenders displacements of identity and place and this has formed the core of critical reflection in postcolonial ecocriticism; that is, the idea of achieving a global community, from a western ideological construct, implicitly accounts for the depletion of the natural environment. Therefore, globalization becomes double critique since it both accounts for progress (for first world countries) and backwardness (for third world countries, fourth world countries and the nonhuman world). In the light of several arguments against and for globalization, this paper examines Olu Obafemi's *Wheels* in relation to the self/other dichotomy. From the analysis of the selected text, it is discovered that the objectification of the third and fourth world countries and the nonhuman world in the process of globalization is the quest by Western forces to maintain the status quo of the hegemonic tendency inherent in the binary oppositions between the first world countries and the third and fourth world countries. While arguments in post-colonial studies investigate and distort the violent hierarchical oppositions of the self/other, this paper concludes that upturning the binary demonstrates that identity is forged within the context of *difference* – a free play of language between the two forces of signification and this suggests that the presence of one implicates the absence of the other and vice versa. Therefore, globalization, while being ambivalent, can shed its negative linings within the irresolvable and undecidable play of difference between the first world countries and the third and fourth world countries.

Keywords: Globalization, displacement, identity, *Wheels*, binary opposition

Introduction

One of the central tenets of postcolonial ecocriticism, according to Rob Nixon (2005), is the axiom that “there is no social justice without ecological justice” (p.35). This statement, on the one hand, illuminates that there is an almost inseparable link

between social injustice and the degradation of the nonhuman world; on the other hand, it suggests that ecological equity (in terms of maintaining the health of the nonhuman world) cannot be obtained when social injustice prevails in the human society. If this stands as the major mantra of postcolonial ecocriticism, then Olu Obafemi's *Wheels* suitably exemplifies this thought, though with some apparent tensions and contradictions – the interface between an oppressed class and the exploitation of the nonhuman world, that is, how does the marginalization of the oppressed class equal the devastation of the nonhuman world? Thus, the problematic question central to this paper is how can the health of the natural world entail a preservation of the health of the oppressed class in the society? While nearly all nations of the world are built on the system of capitalism, nowhere is it more operational than in third and fourth world countries, especially former colonies. In addition, since Huggan and Triffin (2010) argue that postcolonial ecocriticism is a “historically produced discourse” (p.6), it would suffice to clarify the context – social and historical, from which *Wheels* emerges. It is a historically produced discourse because it focuses on the social, economic, cultural, political milieus of a definite geographical space at a given time. This is also in addition to the antecedents of such milieus. Put more succinctly, Laura Chrisman (1990) argued that “criticism of a nation's contemporary literature cannot be isolated from the imperial history which produced the contemporary version of the nation” (p.38).

The event of colonization which a host of African countries witnessed from the inception of Western explorative and exploitative adventures, coupled with missionary activities within the shores of the African continent, is an experience that has left indelible marks on the polity of African countries. During the colonial regime, the culture, traditional institutions, and social practices of these colonies underwent a radical shift, such that even after “independence”, a host of these African countries still found it difficult to carve niches for themselves or have not allowed the hold of colonization to pass on. This may be as a result of the fact that the colonial masters found a way to keep these former colonies under control – through the guise of what is called globalization, development, progress, and other terminologies that subconsciously inculcate in these former colonies the need to mimic rather than to explore their whole creativity and intellectual genius for the discovery of potential. In addition, post-independence leaders of former colonies are manipulated and are used as tools of oppression in what Saro-Wiwa calls “*Domestic Colonialism*”, “indigenous colonialism” or “black colonialism” (cited in Nixon 2005: p.38). Thus, the inability of Africa's post-colonial elite to shake off the imperialist-capitalist mentality of their predecessors made Franz Fanon describe them as the “colonized” that have been “elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle” (Fanon, 1967: p.9).

Postcolonial ecocriticism, which brings post colonialism and ecocriticism into collaboration, is built on two main axioms. First, the global environmental crisis is politically motivated and second, social injustice is synonymous with injustice to the natural world. Thus, as argued by Gayatri Spivak (1988), some countries, which are acclaimed first world countries, provide investment (capital) and a host of other countries, termed third world countries by Eurocentric critics, provide the labour, raw material, and the land (the natural condition) for these investments. She further argues that “in the interest of maintaining the circulation and growth of industrial capital (and of the concomitant task of administration within the nineteenth-century territorial imperialism), transportation law and standardized education systems were developed – even as local industries were destroyed, land distribution was rearranged, and raw material was transferred to the colonizing country (Spivak, 1988: p.287). Thus, Spivak recognises the human/nature dichotomy present in the relations between first world and third and fourth world countries. The human side of the human/nature binary is, in Eurocentric conception, the first world countries while the nature side is comprised of the marginalised natives of third world nations and also the depredated natural space. While Spivak’s arguments focus mainly on the economic benefits associated with the politically motivated capitalist movements of first world countries, the depredations of the natural space of the third and fourth world countries cannot be ignored.

In line with this, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002) argue that while post colonialism covers the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day, “a major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement” (p.8). The idea of “place” thus brings ecocriticism into discourse with post colonialism and the idea of displacement connotes the idea of loss – physical, land, spiritual and national. Thus, postcolonial ecocriticism is a body of critical discourse which holistically challenges social structures, power structures and hierarchies associated with the effects of colonialism and the environment. By being holistic, it entails a consideration of the antecedents, current courses, and implications of social and environmental injustices with a view to accentuating the need for collapsing binaries rather than upturning them or to put it simply, it “dismantles basic assumptions of a canonical text by developing a counter text” (Helen Tiffin, 1987: p.22).

Overall, this history of colonization (in the Third and Fourth Worlds) and its attendant social and environmental ills serve as a backdrop for the actions depicted in *Wheels*. This is done from by challenging the notion of globalization and the nuances of loss (particularly social and environmental) that accompanies the term in a bid to unravel the construct of binaries towards collapsing it.

Authorial and Textual Background

Olufemi Obafemi is a Nigerian poet, novelist, and playwright as well as author of several critical texts on several issues in Nigerian Literature. Renowned as a dramatist, he is believed to be the pioneer of experimentation in revolutionary aesthetics in Nigerian drama to offer a critique of the socio-political and economic realities in Nigeria using motifs from traditional ethnic groups (Uwadinma-Idemudia, 2010). In addition, he also contributed to the popularization of post-feminist discourse in contemporary Nigerian drama. The radical nature of Obafemi's writings could be traceable to the fact that, born in 1950, his early life coincided with years of the dying embers of physical colonialism and the early years of independence in Nigeria respectively. The early post-independence era of Nigeria was particularly characterized by poor indigenous leadership, threat to nationhood, tribalism, and the evils of neo-colonialism among others (King, 1986). Thus, the need to find solutions may have informed the revolutionary tropes evident in the works of Obafemi as well as those of post-independence writers in Nigeria. The works of Obafemi include *Nights of a Mystical Beast* (1986), *The New Dawn* (1986), *Suicide Syndrome* (1993), *Naira Has No Gender* (1993), *Wheels* (1997), *Dark Times are Over?* (2005), *The Love Twirls of Adiitu-Olodumare* (2016), and *Iyunade* (2016).

Wheels (1997) is Olu Obafemi's first published novel, and it focuses on the post-independence and post-civil war experiences in Nigeria. Similarly, themes of social injustice, conflicting class ideology, and class exploitation are explored in the text using the fictional setting of Giro. The story opens with the character of Baba Kofo who expresses his resentment at being forcefully dismissed from the army after fighting in the civil war without adequate compensation. On the other hand, Baba Seun and Baba Kemi are retired army personnel and who, by virtue of occupying top positions in the army before retirement, receive huge business contracts from the government. Baba Seun collaborates with white men (Mr. Peacock and Mr Fox) to bring social and economic changes to Giro. However, the continuous failed promises and policies of the political elites in Giro make Baba Kofo, Pa Grauba, and other members of the lower class sceptical of the proposed changes, resentful of the upper class, and angry at the discrimination and oppression they suffer.

The resentment and anger are not shared by the children from the different social groups. Kofo and Kemi (the son and daughter of Baba Kofo and Baba Kemi respectively) are in a romantic relationship. They are also friends with Seun (the son of Baba Seun) and Gbenga (the son of an unnamed serving army general). Together, Kofo, Kemi, Seun, and Gbenga organize a meeting for all the parents of Giro, irrespective of class, to create a dialogue on how to end destructive practices

informed by class differences in their community. On this note, *Wheels* reflects the vagaries of the civil war in Nigeria and its aftermath as well as a search for social harmony and equity in a society ravaged by social bias and class inequality.

Globalization and Marginalization in *Wheels*

The ideas of globalization and marginalisation are some of the identifiable features of a postcolonial text with environmental implications. A postcolonial text is one which actively seeks to “unveil and deconstruct any continuing colonialist powers, structures and institutions” (Gilbert and Tompkins, 2002: p.3). It is pertinent to therefore unmask the *postcoloniality* of *Wheels*. The *postcoloniality* (the idea of being a text that captures the postcolonial era of a formerly colonized space) of the novel is evident in its representation of postcolonial society, a former colony of Britain. The spatial setting of text Giro, according to the narrator of *Wheels*, is a town that was reeling from the effects of two and half years of civil war. The reference to civil war in the text is one that is representative of a host of African countries. This is because civil wars were prevalent in most African countries, especially those who gained independence in the late 50s and early 60s, and these civil wars claimed the lives of prominent nationalists. For example, the civil war in Ghana led to the death of Kwame Nkruma (President), in Congo, it resulted in the death of Patrice Lumumba (Prime Minister), and in Nigeria, it led to the death of her first Republican leaders such as Sir Tafawa Balewa (Prime Minister), Samuel Ladoke Akintola (Premier of the Western Region), Sir Ahmadu Bello (Premier of the Northern Region). The reference to the civil war is manifest in the words and experiences of some characters such as Baba Kofo: “I fought in the war for two and a half years” (p.100); Baba Seun: “we fought to KEEP OUR COUNTRY ONE” (p.101); and the headmaster who “lost his right legs to the war” (p.60). The expression, “keep our country one” was the mantra of the Nigerian faction of the civil war which lasted in Nigeria between 1967 till 1970.

Having established the fact that *Wheels* represents a post-colonial society, the text further accentuates the idea of internal colonialism. The unwholesome collaboration between some characters who are depicted as “white” and those who are portrayed as “black” brings to the fore the idea of domestic colonialism, in other words, the idea of neo-colonialism. The narrator reveals this when a team of “hungry looking white men” (p.95) are introduced by their black accomplice, Baba Seun, who are all united to ravish the natural resources of Giro’s land. It is this noxious interrelation between the looters of Giro’s land that makes the narrator pose some questions: “Do we now have white politicians? Is colonization not over in our village this many

years after our nation became free of colonial rule? What is happening?" (p.95). The critical response to these questions would simply be that the mantle of leadership has been passed on to the sons of former colonies that are still under the watch, hold, and control of the West. In this sense, the idea of having been free after independence is elusive and questionable.

For a postcolonial ecology, the focus however is not on remonstrating on and rejecting the anthropocentric vision of the neocolonialists (Europeans who are indirectly controlling the economy and socio-political spheres of former and now independent colonies) and black colonialists (natives of former colonies who are in collaboration with former colonial masters in the act of oppression and plundering of former colonies); rather it commits to the specific human actions that these classes of people exhibit which in turn damage indigenous lands and the planet in general. The major consequence of the alliance between the West and the black colonialists is the oppression of the marginalized class and the degradation of the nonhuman world. It would be pertinent to demonstrate some cases of social and ecological injustices recounted in the novel.

Social injustice is revealed in the parallel which can be drawn between the characters of Baba Kofo and Baba Seun, on the one hand, and between Baba Kofo and Solomon Obakewo, the son of the Oba of Giro town, on the other. After the civil war ended, Baba Kofo was sent back home with a paltry thirty pounds as benefits on account that he had only third standard education despite being at the forefront of the war. Baba Seun, on the other hand, sits in his office all through the war and is promoted at the end of the war because he had obtained a higher degree (western form of education). This is a classic case of "where guerillas/ walk the land while crocodiles/ surf" (lines 5-7) as recollected by Gbanabom Hallowell's in his poem "The Dining Table". Guerillas as used in these lines refers to fighting soldiers who directly face the enemy while "crocodiles" is representative of the class of soldiers who laze around in times of crisis. Secondly, there is no record of Baba Kofo being accorded a heroic welcome after fighting to keep his country undivided, as represented using Giro. When Solomon returns home after studying in London, he is given a heroic welcome because he was perceived to have been educated in the white man's land. Perhaps, if Baba Kofo had been sufficiently educated (western education), he may not have been unceremoniously sent home from the war. The upper class in such former colonies maintains their social stratification based on their alliance with the West.

The instances of social injustice portrayed above also affect the nonhuman world in the same way as that of the marginalized class of the society. As a result of the mechanization activities of Baba Seun and his white collaborators, the landscape of

Giro is altered, causing it to lose many elements. When Kofo returns from college for holiday, his father Baba Kofo tells him: “when you have had something to eat and some story time with your mother, take a walk. Then come back and tell me what you see. If you find your way among the caterpillars and you can still recognize the landscape, come back and tell me what you feel” (p.122). This suggests that Kofo may hardly recognize the landscape due to the exploitative activities of mechanized farming which the land of Giro had been subjected to as against the subsistence and sustainable model of farming which the village had long time practiced. The narrator recounts how the landscape is degraded due to the activities of black colonialists and their western nationals; during a conversation with his wife, Baba Kofo retorts:

They have cleared our prime tree. Our palm tree. The source of our wealth and joy. The source of oil and fresh wine. Emu, the potent fire in men’s throat. The rousing joy in the stomach of which washes down the evening meal, cooked with Emu’s red sister, palm oil. Mama Kofo, have you been to Poto, swampy farm with the ashy soil of late? Our Akuro, where new yams burst out at the beginning of June? Yam, the graceful grin on the face of hardworking men. Have you been there lately? They levelled it into a plain ground with the new machines called bulldozers. What of Igbo tree, where the huge trees spread their generous branches to cover the earth with tomorrow’s hope of wealth? Have you been there, Mama Kofo between your markets? No, you haven’t. the roots of our coffee, our cocoa and Iroko trees have been pulled down by the giant tractor. No more shade from the non-day sun. (p.120)

The above excerpt shows that the instruments such as bulldozers and tractors, which are technological inventions from the western world, are used to ravage the earth. While the earth bleeds from the ploughing of the hard machines, the inhabitants are forced to lose some of their staple foods. In addition, the excerpt also reveals how these exploitative activities contribute to global warming which the world is currently battling with. This is evident in how giant trees which help to reduce the intensity of the sun, shielding the soil from its powerful rays, are hacked down.

One may argue however, that technological inventions such as bulldozers and tractors which promote mechanization are forms of development and progress (both of which are associated with globalization) from which the people of Giro, in *Wheels*, would benefit. In fact, the ideas of globalization are supposedly aimed at making third and fourth world countries *on par* with first world countries. For such development and progress to be made available in “underdeveloped”, “undeveloped” countries or former colonies, they would require the intervention of the first world

countries. However, a closer look at the term “development” being preached by neo-colonialists and black colonialists shows that it is actually a “colonizing anti-colonialism” (Esteva, 1997: p.116). The term “colonizing anti-colonialism” suggests that the idea of neocolonialism is aimed at submerging nationalism, or what could be termed as re-colonization through the help of the indigenes of the former colonies on the pretext of helping such former colonies. While addressing the gathering of the people of Giro at the unveiling ceremony of the mechanization plan, Baba Seun speaks:

Today, we bring you good tidings. You can see that we have company. Our white friends have come to give us assistance. They have come to bring smiles back unto our faces. Faces which suffering has made wrinkled over the years... we are hungry and in poor social conditions. That is the reason why our friends here, the white men have come to save us. (pp.101-102)

The words “assistance” and ‘save” used in Baba Seun’s speech becomes flawed when the personality of the white people who are meant to oversee the mechanization agenda is closely examined.

The three characters from England are Mr. Fox, Miss Nancy and Mr. Peacock. Mr. Fox, who is an agricultural engineer, is solely concerned with the yields and harvests of the natural resources in the land of Giro. His name – Fox- metaphorically reveals that he is an embodiment of deceit, incomprehension, and destruction based on the connotations that the word “fox” suggests, a wild animal. Miss Nancy is described as a business executive with Westminster Bank of Britain. Indeed, the bank is responsible for providing the finance for the execution of the mechanization agenda in Giro, which would come in the form of loan. Though Baba Seun’s speech has not explicitly stated this, but the ulterior motives of a foreign banker on the crevices of another land (particularly a former colony) need to be examined in order to grasp the exploitative role of the bank. Westminster Bank of Britain is also a synecdochical representation of international monetary agencies that provides loans to third world countries and thereby impede the prosperity and development of such nations. The colossal amount of loans that these third world countries receive from such western financial agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank are a case in point. Finally, there is Mr. Peacock who is described as a representative of the Ministry of Trade and Commerce in Britain. His presence only ensures that all the produces that would be harvested in the name of mechanization are sold to the West. There is, therefore, scepticism and a tone of cynicism associated with the “assistance” that such first world countries desire to offer. This is reminiscent of Huggan and Triffin’s (2010) view on the Western notion of development that it is “at best a form of strategic altruism, in which technical and financial assistance from

the self-designated First World is geared to its own economic and political concerns” (p.28). Rather than seeing to the development of the indigenous communities, they greedily hanker after the marketability of nature.

When Baba Seun further remarks on the mechanization agenda, the contradictions inherent in development vision for Giro town are further revealed:

... the white man wants to help us turn our fertile land into inexhaustible harvests of crops – rice, maize and so on. He wants to turn our virgin, but wasting forest into trees which yield loads of money; cocoa, coffee, rubber, castor, cashew... mechanized farming, framing with heavy machines. No longer the crude hoes and cutlasses. We give him our land and he turns it into money for us. What will be his own gain? He takes the produce to his factory and turn them to civilized materials for us to buy. (p.103)

Several issues are implicit in the quotation above. The white man, symbolic of the West, desires to “help” indigenous people, but rather than help them to produce staple food for their local consumption, paradoxically, it is cash crops which would serve as fuel and raw materials for western industries that the mechanization farming aim at producing. In addition, the cash crops would not be processed in the land of the indigenes; rather it is to be taken to foreign lands thereby deepening the dependence of the third world countries on the West. The hoaxical position of progress and development associated with the globalization thought lies in the fact that the industries that would process the raw materials are not good enough to be situated in the indigenous communities from where they are obtained. These raw materials are only deemed good enough for the industries of the West.

The foregoing implies that there is a growing valuation of industrialized nations and a corresponding devaluation of subsistence-based communities. Likewise, even the produce from these indigenous communities, as recounted in the novel, are not conceived as being “civilized” as such the likes of Mr. Fox, Miss Nancy and Mr. Peacock desire to “civilize” the produce from the natural environment of the subsistence-based lands. This conjures up images of physical colonization which is thought to have ended. On the whole, the idea to “help”, “assist” and “save” third world countries is a fabricated fiction and “myth propagated by the West that, under the guise of assisted modernisation, re-establishes the very rift (social, political, economic) between the First and Third worlds that it claims it wants to heal” (De Rivero, 2001: p.110). This explains why Baba Seun and Pa Garuba, a hunter, are against the development which the mechanization of the farming system in Giro would herald. According to them, a modern form of servitude is the unseen, yet

undeniable, promise that such agendas embody. The narrator recounts the disillusionment with the modern form of farming using the words of Pa Garuba: “we need caution. This sun which rises gently in the morning may burn our skins at noon. Second round of slavery is around the corner. This love is the goat is proclaimed to eat our yams. This fresh romance of the woman for the chickens is to make chicken dance in her soup pot” (p.103). Despite the apparent reactionary activities of this disillusioned class (Pa Garuba and even Kofo) who are extremely sceptical of the globalization, development and progress, the capitalist depredations account for the several forms of environmental exploitation and subsequently degradation. This is portrayed in several lamentations as recounted by the narrator of the novel:

They are removing oil and gas to make huge sums, millions of naira and dollars for the white and tiny crumbs of the money for our own people. (p.127)

The mineral wealth of our land have begun to disappear. Our fertile farmlands are being taken over by white contractors... (p.128)

Look, the white man is cutting our cocoa and coffee, bleeding the sides of our rubber trees. Our rich parents are supporting and enabling it. Nothing comes to the people by way of benefits and amenities. Our people have no farms to go and hunger reigns. (p.154)

There, our land is being bled white by white people with the authority of the cracks in our walls, our government at the centre. They are reaping millions of dollars from our natural endowment from God with neither our consent nor our benefit. (p.156).

Despite the attempt to stand off against the white neo-colonialists and black colonialists, the environment is sapped of its good. This is perhaps traceable to the waning politics of resistance both on the part creative literary artists and the indigenous communities. For example, no character possesses any revolutionary trait beyond the occasional anecdotal speeches made by Pa Garuba and Baba Kofo that draws claps and shouts from the equally timid crowd of oppressed people. In addition, even the narrative technique of the novel oscillates between first person narrative (the story is recounted using this style to reveal the perspectives of Baba Kofo and Kofo at different intervals). At some other points, the narrative style switches to an omniscient narrative style when narration of the events in the home of Baba Seun is made. This fleeing nature of narration hardly contributes compellingly and imaginatively towards stopping the macabre of exploitation in its tracks.

More interestingly, even Kofo who appears to be the driving force behind the fight against the oppressors in Giro constantly withdraws when it is time to face such oppressors. The ironic situation unfolds when his friends – Gbenga, Kemi and Seun – who themselves are children of the oppressors, dare the gut and rise to speak at the occasion that Kofo had organized. When compared to the defiance and ready-to-die stance of Okonkwo for the emancipation of the oppressed Umuofia community in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), the hands-on approach of Waiyaki towards ending intra-tribal hate in *The River Between* (1965), it is evident that the theme of resistance to oppression in literary texts of the post-independence era is waning. This drain in resistance writings, particularly the novel, is the "fate of what one may call inarticulateness" of "the Nigerian Novel during the oppressive military regimes of the 1980s and 1990s" (Egya, 2019: p.91). This further stems from the inability of the narrator to dig deep into the politics of resistance that trailed literary writings of the era of colonization which is born out of the need for over-reliance on the presence. Egya aptly captures it: "In a sense, it might be true that Nigerian writers (especially after flag independence) have an overwhelming sense of presence, are too overburdened with issues of today to think of going to the past to fetch events in historical narratives" (Sule, 2019: p.145). The narrator of *Wheels* thus fails to portray a character that can succinctly inspire change and revolution.

Away from the politics of development which self-proclaimed first world countries assert, the warning that Pa Garuba utters is as a result of two consequences of globalization. Pa Garuba warns that the idea of globalization being preached by the west is a form of modern slavery. These two consequences are: globalization would continue the cycle of oppression of the marginalized humans and the nonhuman other in the former colonies; thus, it ensures an alteration of the identity of these marginalized people. This is because, for the indigenes of Giro, the cultural values attached to land allow their culture to thrive, and once the control of this land is denied identity, it becomes a box of illusion. For instance, the village square in Giro village:

... is multi-purposed. On every market day, which comes every five days, people come from all surrounding villages to sell their wares at the market square. Also, great and serious matters are discussed by the old wise men of the village in the square. Matters of war, peace, domestic conflicts between neighbours, even between husbands and wives, get resolved here. They say on the day of creation, the founder of the town sat under the huge Odan tree in the village square and on his departure, he blessed the place. I hear that even witches hold their nightly meetings under the tree. It is a mystical place indeed. (p.67)

The above extract reveals how land is vital towards the construction of identity, particularly in Africa. It is the culture marker; traditional institution preserver; history-marker; and serves as ties to the ancestors of the community. This, in itself, is particularly true of a typical African community's conception of the idea of land. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, for example, it is evident how the village square holds the key to community bonding through entertainment activities, adjudication of cases and a place for festivities to take place. In addition, land is vital to preserving culture as the evil forest showcases. The evil forest is a place where people with abominable disease are thrown into to die. While the evil forest carries several practices as some can term it as a place of barbarism, it is evident that it is a place that preserves age-long customs of the Igbo people as depicted in the novel. Whether that is good or bad is only a matter of *perspective*. In Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Weep not Child* (1964), land is used to depict the colonialist notion of ownership and the holistic and spiritual notions of land on the path of Africans – a classic case of the same land being conceived differently. This is portrayed using the character of Ngotho, who returns from World War I to discover that white settlers have taken over his ancestral land. He, however, works tirelessly on the land because he sees it as a responsibility “he owed it to the dead, the living, and the unborn of his line to keep guard over this shamba [land]” (p.33). This reveals the emotional and ancestral attachment to land while Mr. Howlands, one of the white settlers in the novel, regards the land as a “wild country to conquer” (p.32).

Similarly, that the village square in Giro would be a place for entertainment, trade, justice, and the meeting place for “evil witches” points to the important role that land plays in constructing the identity of African countries. When such village squares are converted to places for large foreign offices and mechanized farming, it not only disconnects the inhabitants of such communities from their natural world and their ancestral roots, it also leads to a displacement of identity. This accounts for Pa Garuba's defiance against the mechanization agenda: “some of us are ready to fight to protect the land of our fathers. It is the only thing that we have left” (p.103). On the whole, the idea of land in the novel depicts that the neo-colonialists obsession with land ownership arises out of a sense of greed and total disregard for the land while the marginalised class's conception of land is one of responsibility to preserve ancestral markers of identity rather than outright exploitation.

In addition, *Wheels* depicts how western education – one of the major instruments of globalization – disengages inhabitants of indigenous communities away from their land and association with the natural world in addition to degrading the natural world. Two instances explain this point. When Solomon Obakewo, the son of the Oba of Giro, returns from London, having obtained a B.A. degree, “men and women carrying tree branches” (p.66) rally to celebrate the returning Solomon who wears a

“whiteman’s dress” because he is an “educated king” in “civilized times”. Therefore, he is a “modern king” who “does not wear Agbada or Aso Oke” (p.67). The tree branches which the villagers tear off trees to celebrate the return of a modern king implies how the elements of nature suffer. The act of cutting off parts of a tree for such celebration as the return of an educated person reveals the constant degradation of nature for the slightest westernizing achievement. In addition, Solomon has himself become estranged from the culture of the Giro people by dressing in foreign attire. This is a rejection of his native land as it is the land that makes culture thrive. He is, in effect, one of those cultural orphans who suffer from western cultural and linguistic hegemony.

The character of Kofo also reveals how western education bifurcates the link between him and his native land. Kofo, who is the narrative voice when the story takes the first-person narrative technique, romantically idealizes the inspiration behind the narrative process of *Wheels* thus:

The smell of the first rain of the year is fresh, like a newly opened deodorant. The earth breathes warmth and the thin hands of the rain spread across the sky. This yields myriad of colours to the sky, and the night wear a thick cloak. It is in this atmosphere of sprinkling sporadic first rains and early onset dusk that my story begins.” (p.30)

The above extract reveals a character that is attuned to the natural environment and the careful selection of words that appeals to the sense of sight, sound, and smell. Thus, Kofo is cultured to his native land, but this soon disappears when he leaves his native Giro to college where he is left to imaginatively recreate the natural world of his village. When he returns home, he hardly recognizes the landscape as he had undergone a phase of displacement, since another sense of place – the westernized place of college – had infiltrated his consciousness. This perhaps indicates why he directed his fight towards achieving social justice and not against ecological injustice despite the fact that the rivers of Giro had become polluted, and the timbers of their forests have all been felled. The romantic recollection that Kofo had earlier done should have pulled him towards the decrepit natural environment, but as a result of the displacement from native land, he rather focuses on achieving social balance.

While one may argue that since social justice equals ecological justice, then the focus of Kofo may, after all, be valid. That the ecological hold of the natural world no longer takes the fore in Kofo’s fight reveals a detachment from it. The nostalgic recollections when he was in school reveal a struggle to be reunited with his lost native land. Thus, he does not speak of land directly because his attachment to the

fauna and flora of his native land had perhaps lessened due to his contact with western education.

It seems that the very idea of globalization, development and progress are predicated upon the depletion of the nonhuman world and the oppression of the humans that are more attuned to the nonhuman world. The narrator critiques this notion by upturning the foundational western hegemonic narrative that objectifies the third and fourth world countries in the face of the subjectification of the West. The narrator questions this through the experience of Kofo when he is confronted with strange and scientific terminologies of western thought. The narrator questions:

Must we always kill animals in order to make progress and acquire knowledge? Were these animals able to form themselves into a union, and protest successfully, that will be the end of Biology experiments (p.81)

The above assertion reveals that animals, which are a representation of the nonhuman world alongside the inhabitants of such indigenous communities, are, so to speak, the subject of the knowledge that emanates from the West as represented using biology, thus plundering the West into the mode of an object. Therefore, the idea of globalization and development (as portrayed in the mechanization vision in Giro) would be crippled without the westernized objects – indigenous societies. Perhaps, there is need to upturn the subject/object binary associated with the West and Indigenous societies. It is on this note that Elizabeth Deloughrey (2014) argues that “the enormous disciplinary system of natural knowledge production cannot be defined as simply European; it was created through the extraction of knowledge and labour from indigenous and colonial subjects” (p.324). Therefore, the object in the subject/object dichotomy becomes venerated towards the vilification of the subject.

One might ask: would it be fair to argue, based on the preceding points, that the idea of globalization is entirely derogatory, negative, anti-progress and destructive, in the long run, to the indigenous people's identity? No doubt, it has been established that the idea of achieving western progress is largely predicated on the resources (both human and nonhuman) of the indigenous societies, it still does not undermine the fact that the indigenous societies have attained a form of “development” as a result of contact with the Western world, in terms of further discovering the natural endowments of the indigenous societies. This entails that the idea of exploitation of the natural resources which is often laid against the globalization vision is not entirely negative. This is because the idea of exploitation results from the idea of exploration – which in itself leads to a furtherance of human civilization. On the

whole, the idea of globalization and the development that it envisions may not be totally malicious and stifled.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis underscores the sense of loss as an inherent factor in the political, cultural, social, dialectical relations between the first world countries and third world countries. The ontological assumptions that globalization brings about a sustainable development and empowerment and that everything about globalization is disruptive and negative are all discursively called into question. Globalization fails to offer a progressive space for the less privileged countries to utilize their natural resources without any form of an alien imposition; the adroit spread of science and technology and its impact in every sphere of human endeavours is inevitable and unavoidable. Thus, the loss of aboriginal cultural values and natural resources of the land as well as a distortion of identity is developed through colonization and imperialist-capitalism; loss and distortion that goes beyond expression and apprehension; loss and distortion that vanish under the sway of time; loss and distortion that are irrecoverable and inexplicable. On this note, this paper argues that the contemporary socio-political life in third and fourth world countries with regards to cultural values, natural resources of land, and identity are under the pressure of globalization. The natural land is exploited, destroyed, and plundered in the name of globalization, which opens up a new place; this suggests that an old place exists prior to the arrival of the new place. The new place shaped and thwarted its identity within the contradictory and ambivalence space of cultural identity. Therefore, the theorization of colonial discourse within the context of eco-postcolonial practices transcends beyond a mere rehearsal of hegemonic construction, but a conceptual analysis that demonstrates how the Self and the Other are implicated.

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