Wilberforce Island Review Volume 21, N0 1, March, 2023

Green Consciousness in G'Ebinyo Ogbowei's Select Poems

Dr. Ben-Fred **OHIA**

Abstract

Environmental issues have permeated recent literary writings just as post colonialism and neo-colonialism did in the later part of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries African and Nigerian literatures. This new bride of artistic consciousness is derived from the need to restore the pristine environment from unwanted despoliation, deforestation and Greenhouse gas emissions. Thus, the study considers environmental restoration as the artistic purview of G.'Ebinyo Ogbowei's poems against the backdrop of Green consciousness. In concrete terms, literary studies and humanities have shown, to a large extent, interest in the concept of anthropocene and the resultant eco-alienation which has dominance on contemporary Niger Delta ecopoetics since the early 20th century. Green theory as a recent critical theory in literature discusses the prognosis of ecological damage, the primacy of nature; its biological and ecological survival in an era of anthropocentrism. Green studies are often regarded as the bedrock of Eco-criticism. They also take into consideration the political and economic dimensions to environmental protection and survival. These dimensions give rise to what is regarded as political theory and Green Economic theory. In conclusion, the application of this theory in literature helps to refocus on the environment. The paper observe that Ogbowei's poetry interrogates the issue of eco-estrangements in contemporary Niger Delta ecopoetics in his entire poetic oeuvre. The paper recommends that writers and critics use it to situate any literary works that deal with environmental issues in order to look at the hidden meanings in the works. Finally, the environment must not be degraded, therefore people are encouraged to always keep to the Green consciousness.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism, Ecological Damage, Environmentalism, Green Studies, Niger Delta Literature.

Introduction

Niger Delta literature is one of the emerging regional literatures that have focused on the question of environmentalism. Like African literature and Nigerian literature, Niger Delta literature is often regarded as a protest literature, focused on the immediate problems of the people. The problems of environmental exploitations, degradation and the struggle for survival in a cauldron of social and political inequalities are the focus of Niger Delta literature. These inequalities are considered as an artificial creation from the exploitation of the environment. "Oil exploration destroys the environment and reduces the opportunity for human survival" (Okuyade, 75). The Niger Delta of Nigeria is a region of mass wetlands known as

the Delta of the river Niger with its major and minor tributaries that empty into the Atlantic Ocean. It has a land mass covering about 70,000 square kilometres and it is considered the "third largest contiguous mangrove forest in the world". This cartographic Niger Delta is mainly covering states like Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta, but the term Niger Delta was later used to refer to all coastal areas in the region which include Edo, Akwa-Ibom and Cross-River States. However, in 2003 when former president Olusegun Obasanjo created the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), three states believed to be oil producing states, were added to make it nine. They are Abia, Imo and Ondo states. Thus, what we have now are cartographic Niger Delta and political Niger Delta. The region accounts for over 90% of Nigeria's foreign earnings from oil and gas, and about 60% of federally distributed revenue (KonteinTrinya, 398).

This is to say that the survival of the nation, Nigeria, as well as the variousother regions in the country is largely dependent on the resources from the Niger Delta region. Despite this economic invaluable position of the Niger Delta region, its environment continues to suffer neglect and further degradation. These neglect and degradation are unarguably, the albatross of crisis in the Niger Delta region. It is this crisis that has attracted several attentions including the artistic focus of creative writers referred above. Alwell Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu hold that "the crisis in the Niger Delta… has duly received literary attention, both from writers who are indigenous to the Niger Delta and those that are not" (53).

It simply suggests that Niger Delta literature, like every other regional literature, primarily endures the social, political and ecological experiences of the region. Chidi Amuta has argued on the significance of literature to societal struggles. According to him, "as a reflection of social experience through the prison of human imagination, the ontological Essence of literature is to be located in terms of the extent to which it recycles social experience and transforms it into aesthetic proposition" (Onukaogu and Onyerionwu, 53). The aesthetic proposition here is the Niger Delta literature. Just as the African literature and the Nigerian literature are noted for their socialist imperatives, so does the Niger Delta literature, which social imperative is vehemently ecological.

So, at this stage, one may say that the protest novel is setting up its fundamentals" (Ohia, 2). G. G. Darah agrees with Ohia as he believes that in the Niger Delta, "titanic struggle for human dignity and freedom from oppression has been going on… since the mid-1960s" (3). The oppression here referred to by Darah includes both environmental and human oppression. To Ohia and Darah, the urge to survive these environmental and human oppressions has been too strong to resist, and so "the nation and people of the Niger Delta have been engaged in another war;

a war of verbal weapon to emancipate their territory and natural resources. The verbal weapon here is the metaphor for the emergent Niger Delta literature. The people and nation above refer to the writers who create the literature. This literature is therefore noted for its implications on the problems of ecological damage perpetuated in the Niger Delta region. This damage in the opinion of the duo is as a result of the politics of dispossession orchestrated by ethnocentric biases.

However, post-colonial Africa has been negatively affected by hyper-capitalist endeavours that dangerously influence the relationship between the people and nature. Reinhold Münster has noted that some geological hypotheses today expand the range of questions which could be addressed by both natural scientists and scholars in the Humanities. The Anthropocene is one of such issues (2). The traditional notions of nature see it as the opposite to human culture, technology, history, society, or even metaphysics.

Thus, the theme of politics of dispossession is often entrenched in the literature of the Niger Delta. It defines the question of human and environmental oppressions which shape the artistic thoughts in the Niger Delta literature, because "since the 1950s, the petroleum operations have caused great devastation to the Niger Delta" (Ugochukwu cited in Trinya, 398), with little or no impact in the "development landscape of the region". Don't forget Trinya's lamentations on these issues of dispossession when he says that "to differing degrees of creative competence, this denial of development on a region whose resources have been used to develop other parts of the nation has constituted the enticing and compelling theme" (399). Similarly, Ohia avers that "the African protest novel is thus an embodiment of the plight and the frustration of the individual moralist in an atmosphere of spiritual and moral decadence. Crimes and acts of outlawry are seen not only as a language of defiance, but of protest and freedom. Protest literature protests against injustices… against moral values, cultural imperialisms, etc. inherent in contemporary African societies" (5).

The perspective of environmental oppressions constitutes the thrust of this paper. Here, the lack of environmental protection policy, and the continuous plundering, rape, and exploitation of the region is understood as environmental oppression. And the artistic concern of writers towards the campaign for environmental protection and restoration is regarded as "Green" consciousness or environmentalism. Trinya equally explained that "the harsh environment of the Niger Delta has left diverse imprints on the creative consciousness of diverse Niger Delta writers" (400). He continued by saying that these imprints are "characterised by the theme of lament for an endowed region that is spoilt by allied greedy strangers" (400). The spoiling of the environment is sadly, a total disregard to the

"being" of nature. This is the concern of the proponents of Green theory, that "nature" should be considered as an existent being, therefore, human activities and actions should include, without prejudice to man's economic survival, its protection and restoration.

The environment is very much explained through eco-literacy. Eco-literacy is an acronym for ecological literacy which is the focal point of this paper. The environment is badly exploited leading to hardship and corruption in the society. In "Exploitation, hardship, and corruption as impediments to development in the Niger Delta: A study of Kaine Agary's*Yellow-Yellow"*, Christian Chukwuloo Chukwueloka explores another aspect of Agary's*Yellow-Yellow* which is, as a mirror that projects the exploitation, hardship, corruption and other hindrances to the development of the Niger Delta region. He intends to trace the cause of these troubles to the exploitations of both the land and women of the Niger Delta by expatriate oil workers and African rich men. In his words, Agary's *Yellow-Yellow "*...exposed the various forms of corruption in the Niger Delta – the exploitation of young girls by both expatriates and the African bourgeoisie. While the land is generally degraded by the exploration of oil without a corresponding benefit or maintenance of the environment, their women are also sexually cheated..." (Chukwueloka 12).

It therefore follows that Ecocriticism and Green Theory work for analysing and evaluating environmental issues as integral components of socio-political and cultural issues in postcolonial narratives. Additionally, Ecocriticism explores how colonialism changed how the former colonised countries perceived and cared for the environment. However, the colonised states valued environmental concerns, but the onset of colonialism also affected how people perceived their regarded the environment. For instance, before the coming of the imperialists, ancestral trees, forests, and water sources were revered and safeguarded, and their animal changed the perception of the people's appreciation of the environment.

Similarly, on Agary's novel, Sule Emmanuel Egya in his article entitled "Sexualised Body, Exploited Environment: A Feminist Ecocritical Reading of Christy Watson's *Tiny Sunbirds Far Away* analyses Egya's novel as an example of a female writer's account of the Niger Delta experience. He categorises Egya's*Tiny Sunbirds Far Away* among the novels that "...draw attention to the violation of the female body and the environment; and to argue that by complying the plight of the environment and that of women, the author, in different ways, makes a powerful statement against patriarchal nature of the institutional power behind petrodollar global capitalism..." (Egya vii). Uchenna Ohagwam in his article, "the Niger Delta crisis in the Niger Delta novel: Reflections on Kaine Agary's*Yellow-Yellow*", uses the

book under review to assess the extent the people of Niger Delta have benefited from the abundant natural resources the region is endowed with. In his words, "an assessment of the forms of crises occasioned by oil exploration activities in the region... working within the context of postcolonial theory..." (Ohagwam 3).

Methodology

This paper is pinned to Green Theory; one of the most remarkable outcomes of the theoretical openness of ecocriticism has been a relatively new critical school. This literary approach takes into account studies in environmental criticism; a connection that is still under discussion and presents some issues. Data will be analysed using content analysis, which involves analysing using the content of the data to identify the impact of exploration in the Niger Delta region as explicated in Ogbwei's poetry. The content analysis identifies the intensity of the impact of the Niger Delta environment and the relationship between the explorations carried out in the environment and the environment itself.

It also adopts narrative analysis, which involves analysing the poems of Ogbowei and the narratives of the persona and other characters in the poetry. The data analysis will be conducted using NVIVO Software, which will be used to organise and code the data, and to identify environmental impacts that emerge from the data. It was conducted systematically and transparently, and was documented in detail to ensure reliability and validity of the findings. The findings are presented clearly and concisely in a way that they will be easy to understand. According to Huggan and Tiffin, "Ecocriticism has tended as a whole to priotise extra-human concerns" (17). Green Theory addresses and uncovers the way in which environmental practices were and are not only "central to the projects of European conquest and globe domination, but also as inherent in the ideologies of imperialism.

Green Consciousness in G'EbinyoOgbowei's Select Poems

The Green consciousness is pinned down in the Green theory that tries to establish the primacy of "nature" as an independent entity; it calls on mankind to acknowledge this by repudiating those acts that bring environmental jeopardy. On one hand, Mohamoud Hamza agrees to this when he says "Green studies calls for the equal rights of the entire living creature in an unpolluted environment (cited in Coupe, 2). Andrew Vincent on the other hand argues, that one of the deep attractions of Green theory is "its claim to be natural ecosystem of the planet" (5). He explains further that Green consciousness as espoused by Green theory also addresses the conditions for our biological continuance as a species. From this species' perspective, Green theory could be said to be articulating the conditions whereby

further meaningful human life is possible with its coexistence with nature. The insistence on healthy environment, interprets Green studies as ecocentric. Ecocentricismprioritises healthy ecosystems because they are a prerequisite to human health and wellbeing.

It is this thrust that engineered G'Ebinyo Ogbowei and other literary writers' "commitment to environmentalist's praxis". Thus, Green theory combines the thrust that nature, though a no-human entity, is an independent being which deserves a corresponding attention and care; and the advocacy for a healthy natural environment for the continuous coexistence between man and nature. Writers like Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Ebi Yeibo, and Ebinyo Ogbowei among others are such poets found to be interested in "Green consciousness" through their environmentalist ideologies. Scholars have taken time to discuss Ogbowei as a poet in different lights. However, variants their opinion may seem, one thing is uniquely significant and that is, that G'Ebinyo Ogbowei is an environmentalist poet, whose artistic purview transcends the confines of Niger Delta ecological problems. This paper agrees with varied opinions of scholars that G'Ebinyo Ogbowei's poetry is environment-based as the poet himself is an environmentalist.

G'Ebinyo Ogbowei's poems have taken on the cause of ecological damage in the Niger Delta. Kontein Trinya avers that "in the ancient history of the Niger Delta of Nigeria art, especially poetry, has made no 'aesthetic' pretences about the engagement with social issues" (13). And Ogbowei is one of those poets with the artistic vision for social engagement. Humphrey Ogu is of the view that Ogbowei sets out to tackle social challenges by advocating social changes in his poetry (205). He goes further to argue that one of the distinguished characteristics of Ogbowei in his poetry is "his social commitment and his apt expression of his disenchantment as well as his desire for change and development of society" (206). This social commitment and the desire for change here, is considered in this paper as the preponderant factors for the Green consciousness in his works. However, in discussing the nature of Ogbowei's poems, Trinya laments that "one hurdle that tentatively confronts the young, newcomer to Ogbowei's poetry is his characteristic omission of punctuation marks, except the imperative" (9). Other than this, Ogbowei is considered as an effective poet, whose works according to Trinya, possess "the power of art to stir psycho-physiological responses from their audiences" (17), making them to mourn over the despoliation of the Niger Delta environment and the eroding of the Green beauty of the environment.

Trinya in analysing poets whose style has more effective implications on the struggle for environmental justice in the Niger Delta exclaimed, "of all the New poets (from the mid1990s, when protests against the region's exploitations began to

be prominent), Gilbert Ebinyo Ogbowei has the more compelling and distinct individual style" (408). He goes further to claim that "Ogbowei's images, carved out of the environment of the Niger Delta, are familiar and original…" (408). His analysis here shows that Ogbowei's poetry, without prejudice to other Niger Delta environmentalist poet, has competent implications on the very issues bothering on the Niger Delta environmental praxis. Perhaps, this is why in his introduction to Ogbowei's heedless ballot box, Trinya upholds that "Ogbowei's mature craft is a poetic ocean awaiting the deep-sea divers of pearl" and that "he is not merely an emergent voice in the Niger Delta, but possibly the most competent of the recent voices coming out of the region" (408/9). These assertions point to the fact that G'Ebinyo Ogbowei's poetry is committed to Niger Delta environmental issues and the attendant injustices. Injustice in the poem includes injustice on the part of the unequal distribution of wealth from the region for the development of the region, and injustice to the environment itself by the human activities of oil explorations, which characteristically murder the Green life of the environment. Ohia draws an analogy with protest as the significant moral basis in "Protest Fiction: A Comparative Study of Richard Wright's *Native Son* and James Baldwin's *Go Tell It On The Mountain* thus: "In the two novels, the significant moral basis of protest is clear. It is a protest against the monsters (whites) who arise in the American society to witch-hunt the blacks and protest against a society that destroys the integrity of the patriotic citizens" (75).

Nkem Okoli and Okwudiri Anasiudu propose that Ogbowei's "Moods of The Wounded River" reiterates what may be deemed the dominant leitmotif in Niger Delta poetry, namely the sorrow one feels on beholding… the pervading poverty and degraded environment" (xiii). The concern for degraded environment here is considered in this paper, to have emanated from his consciousness of the Green philosophy. This Green consciousness is demonstrated in the realisation of the ecosphere in his poetry which "semioticises how a region is raped and plundered and laid waste" (Okoh and Anasiadu, xiii). Such commitment to the environment and how it has been indiscriminately exploited, defines the poet's dialectics with nature, which is the core concern of Green theory. This paper agrees totally with the essays x-rayed above because G'EbinyoOgbowei uses his poetry to correct the rape, plunder and waste of the environment.

Other poems that thematise the environmental issues include Gabriel Okara's "Fisherman's Invocation", J.P. Clark's "Night Rain", Niyi Osundare's "The Eye of the Earth", Tanure Ojaide's "Better Blues and Home Songs" (1998), "Songs of Myself: Quartet (2016), Labyrinths of the Delta (1986), "Endless Songs" (1988) "My Mask", "Seasons", "Where my Heart Beats" and Negro "Sings of

Rivers", Christopher Okigbo's "Heavensgate", Nnimmo Bassey's "We thought it was oil but it was blood" (2002) and others. Green consciousness is used as metaphor by these Nigerian poets, in their poetry, of which majority of them are of the Niger Delta extractions.

G'Ebinyo Ogbowei's "Moods of the Wounded River": The Implications of Devastation

The title "Moods of the Wounded River" is characteristically derived from the reality of the overbearing environmental devastation suffered by the natural environment in the Niger Delta region. The metaphor "wounded river" refers to or implies the loss of aquatic life, loss of the Green tropical vegetation, loss of drinkable water source among other things. It copiously describes in a figurative mannerism, the sad reality of the industrial injuries inflicted on the natural environment by multinational oil companies.

And according to Green theorists, 'Nature' is at the epicentre of man's activities. Such activities should be guided with consideration to protecting 'nature' as a distinct 'being', not a linguistic construct. In the poem, "moods of the wounded river", the writer (poet) captures the violent struggle that follows the exploitation of the Niger Delta environment in order to give meaningful life to indigent fishermen and farmers, 'prying probing knocking down constrictive walls/to free fishermen and farmer from this penal complex (Lines 11 & 12). Yet, in the course of this struggle, the politics of divide-and-rule is employed to cause internal wrangling among the ignorant and indigent citizens. Note that 'my boat goes down' in the first stanza reveals a kind of reminiscence on the early childhood of the persona who was born at the 'blooming port' when the 'roiterous sea' offers its rewards before the unfortunate 'loss' of the Green and aquatic lives as a result of the indiscriminate activities of oil exploration and exploitation.

The effect of these activities is the reaction of nature found in lines 5, 6 & 7 when 'strong winds', 'high waves' 'retired' and 'regaining a constant eye'. However, the use of 'rumble and roll of thunder' reveals the revolutionary underlines of nature towards man's inactions. The 'startling flashes' 'of low hanging clouds' further demonstrates the unhappiness of nature to the unholy activities of man towards the environment. This same feeling of nature's displeasure is equally found in the poem "moods of the wounded river" where 'dark clouds' gather 'over the riddled river' and 'a rising tide of anxiety', 'a rising tide of resentment' showcases the displeasure of nature towards man's indiscriminate activities.

The poem, "moods of the wounded river" bemoans the implications of the devastation of the environment which grossly depletes nature to a regrettable state such that it seems to react against man the 'rising tide' suggests high rising of the sea which leads to flooding. Flooding is a consequence of man's abuse of nature. And take note that in 'green studies', nature is considered as an entity which should be taken care of and not abused. "The solution here is that man should be conscious of the consequence of his wanton exploitation of the resources of nature. To avoid this catastrophic consequence, man should strive not to destroy what he cannot readily replace. In other words, "the exploitation of nature should be commensurate with its replenishment" (Ohia, 159).

Due to the rape of nature which includes the hydrosphere, atmosphere, and lithosphere, the river became wounded, the thunder began to rumble and the tide began to rise. Literature proves to be a critical medium to investigate human life in its infinitude of features: highlights, downfalls, losses, successes, happiness, sorrow and so forth, although it is not the final solution to human problems. Thus, the signal function of literature is also to question those practices and narratives that seek to destabilise not only people's relationship with nature but also people's relationship with their environment. According to Abba A. Abba and Nkiru D. Onyemachi, "in the age of the anthropocene, human beings deploy their exceptional capabilities to alter nature and its essence, including the ecosystem, which invariably leads to eco-alienation, a sense of breach in the relationship between people and nature" (3). This paper argues that G'Ebinyo Ogbowei's "Marsh Boy and other poems" (2013) articulate the feeling of disconnect between the inhabitants of the Niger Delta region and the soil wealth in their community, the paper strives to demonstrate that the Niger Delta people, as a result of this disconnect, have been constrained to perceive the oil environment no longer as a source of improved life but as a metaphor for death. Cajetan Iheka also notes that "the distancing of the Africans from their environment was carried into the practice of African literary studies and post colonialism with an emphasis on the portrayal of rational, modern subjectivities that are often inconsistent with those indigenous practices that connect humans to their environment" (10).

Iheka's argument is relevant to the understanding of the role of ecocriticism in meditating "ecohuman engagement" in the Niger Delta region. If the deconstructive power of ecocritical discourse symbolically enables it to empower the marginalised, it also enables it to mediate the reconnection of what is culturally subjugated. It is obvious that the region from which much of the resources are generated has been seen as the least developed part of the country, with not only the poorest citizenry but also the most plundered environment as a result of the

activities of the local and international oil exploration companies in collaboration with the Nigeria government.

G'Ebinyo Ogbowei, an important Nigerian poet from the Niger Delta has published lots of poetry collections in which the oil-rich region is perceived as an endangered environment. Unfortunately, the huge and diverse range of scholarship on these poetic works reflects on the economic, social and political implications of eco-degradation in the region but falls short of addressing the trope of eco-alienation, the sense of separation between people and nature, which seems to be a significant trope in Niger Delta literature. "Green consciousness" is used as a term to refer to nature "friendliness" and the need for literary engagements that centre on environmental concerns especially with reference to ecological disruptions in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. For instance, some scholars have observed and argued that, to a considerable extent, what currently prevails in the Niger Delta oil enclave is "a specific variant of internal colonialism and that the exploitative and grossly inequitable entitlement-relations is between the Nigerian state and the oil communities explain why "the enormous oil wealth generated is scarcely reflected in the living standard and life chances of the peasant inhabitants of the soil-bearing enclave (Luke 21).

Ogbowei is a prominent poet who has not only deployed his poetic weapons in the fight against environmental injustice in the Niger Delta region but has also inspired a good number of other poets and readers. He seems to be aware that the struggle for emancipation should not be left only in the hands of gun-toting militants working in the creeks. The intellectual angle of the war was in a way needed to complement the other forms of activism going on.

Results and Discussion

Postcolonial and environmental criticisms in the Niger Delta have been the dominant thrust of Niger Delta literature. Over the years, writers have told tales and stories surrounded by environmental effects on Niger Deltans lives and African lives generally. According to Wu, "African environmental literature and criticism can be traced back to the 1960s, pre-dating "ecocriticism" as a specifically environment-oriented literary approach that began to prosper in Anglo-American literary studies in the last two decades of the twentieth century" (7). To state the obvious, Ogbowei's poetry under review in this paper as a specific case in point, has attracted creative writing and criticism in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria where multinational oil corporations (IOCs) have done massive environmental damage through oil spills, blowouts, gas flares, and other forms of ecological despoliation. While oil exploration and exploitation are meant to bring wealth to the region, this

has not happened in the Niger Delta... little of the wealth filters to the local communities whose traditional occupation of fishing and farming are destroyed.

According to Feghabo's thesis, "Alienation and Ecoactivism in selected works on Niger Delta Crisis", the environmental crisis in the Niger Delta has provoked into existence writings which thematic focus is in ecological degradation... [Thus], what constitutes the corpus of recent writing on the Niger Delta are the environmentalism and revolutionary aesthetics in the works. This recent writing is a body of writing that identifies with the struggle of the people of Nigerian Delta to salvage both their environment and themselves (15).

The environmental subject is reiterated in Ogbowei's poetry, the poems demonstrate how, if left unchecked, our exploration activities have societal and environmental consequences. In all honesty, Ogbowei has succeeded in mirroring the peculiar appearance of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria in Africa through his poetry. For instance, in "Moods of A Wounded River", "The Heedless Ballot Box" (2000), "Let The Honey Run" (2001), "The Town Criers Songs, (2009), "Marshboy and Other Poems" (2013), and "Matilda" (2018). Ogbowei has remarkably established his reputation as perhaps the most vocal at affirming the degraded region's searing poverty and for expressing resist and especially against a persistent stranglehold of the region by Nigerian central government. His poetics of resistance continually identify with Niger Delta's peoples' resilience and pride. Interestingly, the thematic concerns of his poetry are often clearly delineated along ecocriticism, politics and passion for the women in his life. He has a necessitous advocacy of the region's reclamation through a conscious deployment of subversive poetics. This paper of Niger Delta ecocriticism on green consciousness in G'Ebinyo Ogbowei's "The Poetry of Environmental Praxis" is undoubtedly a major backbone of further researches on this field.

This paper on Green theory is an evolving trend which scope is still being uncovered and defined. The paper examines the origin and progression of this literary concept and the term to date using the works of Bruno Latour, Jonathan Bates, William Rueckert, Lawrence Buell, et al, objectively scrutinising these various opinion, and arguments made on the topic; this paper reaffirms that postcolonial ecocriticism is an emerging trend in literature that is very likely to keep growing in relevance and global recognition for a very long time to come due to the inchoate awareness of the independent existence between human and the environment. This paper, therefore, looks at the primary texts as pieces of ecological literature that educate and create awareness of the volatility of oil production facilities and the impact of irresponsible oil related activities on the ecosystem in

the Niger Delta, while attributing the cause of the ecosystem degradation and destruction to ignorance.

Conclusion

This paper focuses on the study of the Green consciousness in Ogbowei's select poems. It takes into consideration, the growing problems of global ecological damage and the need to revive its original beauty. And in a more specific way, the environmental damage committed by the unilateral and indiscriminate activities of international oil companies (IOCs) in the Niger Delta region, as well as other agents of environmental destruction who do not necessarily exploit oil and gas but carry out some other environmentally unhealthy acts such as deforestation, indiscriminate dumping of refuse and toxic wastes and blocking of drainage systems, bush burning and the likes, hence the focus on Green consciousness as the panacea in order to restore the environment to its original beauty.

Green theory negates the common assumption that 'nature' exists primarily as a term within a cultural discourse, and has no being or meaning of its own. Proponents of this theory rather see 'nature' as an independent being with its intrinsic values. They reject the notion that nature has no intrinsic merit, no value and no rights. Consequently, they believe that the recognition of the meaningful and value of 'nature' which is represented by the entire biosphere is the beginning of ecological survival and protection.

Therefore, Green theory as an eco-critical concept advances the means to protect the environment. 'Nature' should be given its prime regards as a distinct entity. The concept of Green consciousness as used in this paper is geared towards examining the adverse effect of environmental despoliation as a result of prolonged oil explorations. It also takes into cognisance the fact that environmental degradation is not only caused by oil exploration but also other harmful practices toward the environment.

Recommendations

This paper aptly recommends the use of Green consciousness in writings about the Niger Delta region in order to position the Niger Delta literature by establishing its literary prognosis. This paper establishes that Ogbowei's poems and by extension poems of the Niger Delta extraction are derived from the stance of environmental struggle and recommends that these poems show how Niger Delta poets have, through their poems, engage in the campaign for environmental protection, restoration and socio-economic justice. It is the recommendation of this paper that the non-human worlds such as the mountains, vegetations, seas, rivers, the atmosphere should not be subjected to unhealthy subordination by the human world.

In other words, the natural environment should be accorded deserving respect and regards by the human world in order for the two worlds to co-exist.

Acknowledgements

The author would want to thank all the authors of the books and online versions of the works used in this study, particularly G'Ebinyo Ogbowei for given the author access to his poetry, "Marsh Boy and other poems". Godini Gabriel Darah, Tekena Tamuno and KonteinTrinya are highly appreciated for giving me access to their libraries. The author is also profoundly grateful to all government and non-governmental organizations which assisted in no small measure towards the successful completion of this study.

Works Cited

Abba, A. Abba and Nkiru D. Onyemachi. "Weeping in the Face of Fortune: Eco-Alienation in the Niger Delta Ecopoetics" *Humanities Open Access,* 2020, Pp.1-16.

Feghabo, Charles Cliff: "Alienation and Ecocriticism in Selected Works on Niger Delta Crisis", Journal of the Environment, 2014.

Ogbowei, G'Ebinyo. *Marsh Boy and Other Poems.* Kraft Books, 2013.

Godini Gabriel Darah. "Battles of Songs: Udje Tradition of Urhobo". Malthouse Press, 2008.

Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing The Margins.* New York: Routledge, 2001.

Iheka, Cajetan. *Naturalising Africa: Ecological Violence, Agency and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature.*Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Ikiriko, Ibiwari..*Oily Tears of the Delta.* Kraft Books Limited, 2000.

Luke Timothy. *Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy and Culture*. Minepolish: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Münster, Reinhold. Forthcoming. *The Anthropocene, Technology and Fictional Literature.* Translated by Albrecht Classen. Arizona: University of Arizona, 2020.

Ohia, Ben-Fred. "A Comparative Study of Richard Wright's *Native Son* and James Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain*". *Journal of Language (JOLANGS)* 4 (1), Pp. 72-82, 2009.

Ohia, Ben-Fred. "African Literature and the Protest Novel: Neo-Nationalism in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not Child*" *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies* 4 (6): www.bjmas.org, Pp.1-8, 2023.

Ohia, Ben-Fred. "Humanistic Dilemma in Poetry: A Criticism of Niyi Osundare's Concern for Nature in the Eye of the Earth". *The Colloquium: A Multi-Disciplinary Thematic Policy Journal* 6 (1). Pp.155-160, 2017.

Ohia, Ben-Fred. "The Protest Tradition in African Literature: Symbolism in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah". Journal of Humanities, Music and Dance* 03 (05), 2, www.researchgate.net. Pp.1-12, 2023.

Okokoet'al. *The Politics of Oil and the Development of Underdevelopment in the Niger Delta.* University of Port Harcourt Press, 2006.

Okuyade, Ogaga. "African Cultural Art Forms, Eco-Activism and (Eco)-Logical Consciousness: Introduction". *Eco-Critical Literature: Regreening African Landscapes.* African Heritage Press, Pp. ix – xviii, 2013.

Tamuno, Tekena N. *Oil Wars in the Niger Delta1849 – 2009.* Stirling-Horden Publishers Ltd, 2011.

Trinya, Kontein. "Shadows of Development in the New Poetry of the Niger Delta". *Journal of the African Literature Association,* Pp.31-49, 2012.

Wu, C. C., "From Cultural Hybridization to Ecological Degradation: The Forest in Chinua Achebe's *Thing Fall Apart* and Ben Okri's*The Famished Road*." JALA: *Journal of African Literature Association,* 6(2), Pp.59-71, 2012.