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ECO-ENSLAVEMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENTALISM OF THE "OTHER" IIFEOMA'S *OIL CEMETERY*AND CHUMA'S-UDEH'S*FORLORN FATE*

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Abstract
The Niger Delta environment and its discourse in scholarship is central to creative and critical literature in Nigeria. Literary critics have raised various issues stemming from the activities of oil exploration and exploitation in this region, including militarism, activism, environmentalism, and resource control. Niger Delta enslavement (land and people) by multi-national companies, /Nigeria's Federal Government, and how women react to this situation eludes critical appreciation. Multi-national oil corporations regard the people of this region asless-than-human and this perception justifies the slavish treatment enduredby the people and this provoked women's response in Nwoye May Ifeoma's *Oil Cemetery* and Ngozi Chuma-Udeh's*Forlorn Fate*. Postcolonial binarity of "Self" and "Other" and its relationship to the discourse on environment guides the analysis of the narratives. The ill-treatment of environment and people of Niger Delta by multi-national oil corporations/Federal Government is because these bodies consider the inhabitants of the region as their slaves. From the novels, women emerge as better leaders in the struggle for eco-sanity and better livelihood for the people of the region because they are capable of changing the bartered narrative of the Niger Delta struggle for a better future. As demonstrated through the creative ingenuity of the novelists, women's strugglehas proven to the multi-national corporations that the environment and people of the region should be treated fairly.
Keywords: Eco-Enslavement, Environmentalism, Multi-nationals, Resource Control, "Self" and "Other"

Introduction

Eco-enslavement, as considered by Leo Morris,is the hypocritical attitude of the supposed eco-friendly advocates who enjoy the wealth and speed of machines that pollute the environment but preach against their use to the common people, as they cause harm to the environment. The privileged class in society enslaves the masses and the environment. This situation played out in the Niger Delta region with subtle distinctions. The privileged class here is the multinational oil

companies and the Federal Government. These oppressors consider the people and the environment as non-entities, and as such, her total obliteration to satisfy their greed is encouraged through the incessant exploration of the resources and exploitation of the people and environment.The pristine state of the Niger Delta, with its attendant numerous issues,have taken several volumes of creative works. These works show the gradual degeneration of the environment caused by incursions of different kinds: Isidore Okpewho's*Tides*, Kaine Agary's*Yellow Yellow*, HelonHabila's*Oil on Water*, Chimeka Garrick's *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*, Nwoye May Ifeoma's *Oil Cemetery*,and Ngozi Chuma-Udeh's*Forlorn Fate*area few examples. The condition of the Niger Delta is equally expressed in the other genres of literature as NiyiAkingbe and Paul Onanugba in their "Resting Pacification: Locating tentions in G'EbinyoOgbowei's poetry address the lachrymal temper in the poetry of the region. With the series of workson these issues—the Niger Delta, the environment, the resources, the people, and their livelihood—a discourse on the region sounds like a cliché in literary scholarship. But, until the burden of the people is lifted, writers and critics alike continue to sound the gong of the need to create a harmonious relationship between man and the environment, which in turn regenerates the Niger Delta environment for the people to retain their means of livelihood.

There is paucity of critical works on these novels but few critics have looked at them from different perspectives. Cornel OnyemaucheUjowundu, Sylvanus Onyeachulam and John Onyema Nwafor in "Themes and Styles in Ngozi Chuma- Udeh's*Forlorn Fate*"believe that literary artists define the aestheticism of their works through style and themes. Using eco-criticism, the critics avers that the foremost theme in the novel is degradation and exploitation. To the authors:

> The sad story of the Niger Delta region becomes the main theme of the novel *Forlorn Fate*, because just like the other Nigerian authors, Ngozi ChumanUdeh decided to address the issues of the oil exploration going on in the Niger Delta regions. She tells us how peaceful Odua was till oil exploration started in their region and Odua is just like every other Niger Delta Community. (95)

These actions are considered by the critics as oppressive and as such, oppression is one of the themes of the novel. Militancy, injustices, struggle for survival, slavery,

and crime, according to the authors are some of the accruing themes from the activities of oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta. These themes are sizzled into the narrative through different literary stylistic devices such as language, imagery, flashback, foreshadowing and the third person narrative technique.

Chukwuka EugeneOfie's "Eco-Feminist Perspectives in Ngozi ChumaUdeh's*Forlorn Fate*: Exploring Gender, Nature and Environmental Justice" addresses the connection between women and environment using the eco-feminism theory. Though both sexes are affected by oil explorative and exploitative activities of multi-national corporations, the women endure the bigger burden in this power relation because to the critic, women existence is largely reliant on the environment in the Niger Delta region. The novelist, according to the critic, contest the power imbalance even within the scope of environmental discourse because "tyranny against women affects all facets of women's lives stretching from health issues, low productivity, inability to cater for themselves and dependents. These oppressive propensities often lead to psychological, economic, emotional and psychology torture for the women" (130).

Mohammed Attai Yakubu in "Text and Message Approach in African Literature and May Ifeoma Nwoye's *Oil Cemetery* as an Exercise in Literary Communication" is the link between a literary product—text and its meaning—message. Using the Wolfgang Iser's Receptive Theory, the critic establishes the deviation of his study from formalism where meaning is incorporated as an aspect of form. That, text is shown as an apparatus that carries meaning distinct from its form because this message transcends generations: reforming, transforming, reordering, and furnishing society for good.

Maria Ajina in her essay, "Ecofeminism in May Ifeoma's *Oil Cemetery*" the exploration of petroleum products in the Delta region, instead of relieving the people has created array of social, economic, political, security and even religious problems in diverse ways which have stampeded the development of the region. The critic reveals the daunting and haunting experiences of the people in this oil rich region as they navigate their existence in the high face of exploitation, ridden with hunger, disease, poverty, death and the depletion of both the environment and woman in this habitation.

Ujowundu, Onyeachulam and Nwafor andYakubu's articles deal with the style of the novelists but Ajina and Ofie's articles attend to the burden of the women in the region as shown in the novels. This paperunearths the level of oppression the region endures in the hands of oil corporations that is crushing it to

the level of "non-entity" for absolute possession and control in May Ifeoma Nwoye's *Oil Cemetery* and Ngozi Chuma-Udeh's*Forlorn Fate*. Thenovels place the relationship between the exploiters and the people within the nexus of post-colonial "Self" and "Other".

According to BillAshcroft, Gareth Griffiths and HelenTiffin, "the 'Other' is anyone who is separate from one's self. The existence of the others is crucial in defining what is 'normal' and in locating one's own place in the world" (154). In postcolonial studies, "the colonized subject is characterized as 'other' through discourses such as primitivism and cannibalism, as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view" (155). Gayatri Charkravorty Spivak's postulation of othering as captured in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's text becomes relevant as the 'Self' creates the other through the process of othering. Edward Said, Stuart Hall, Albert Memmic, Franz Fanon, Spivak, Jacque Derrida, Chinua Achebe and Homi Bhabha influenced the theoretical postulations of the binary of "Self" and "Other" in postcolonial studies. While addressing the "question of the Other" Bhabha avers that "otherness … is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within fantasy of origin and identity" (67). The binary of "Self"/ "Other" according to Bhabha are subject to ambivalence in postcolonial discourse. The orient uses the occident as a yardstick to measure herself, groping to identify what is right, having phobia for novelty. This conceptualization of "Other" aligns with the current discourse because exploiters of the Niger Delta consider the region as derisive and at the same time, desiring because of its resources.

Charles Feghabo, while attending to the issue of triple suffering of the women in the Delta, believes that Otherness "is a feeling that comes with being considered inferior to other(s)" (4). The argument is that this feeling is bifocal as one may feel inferior or others may consider one inferior to them (Self). In the context of the current argument on environmental enslavement the later interpretation of otherness is depicted in the selected narratives because it is this feeling of not self (other) that informs the slavish treatment meted out on the Niger Delta. He affirms this when he avers that "the people in the Niger Delta feel further Otherness in their relationshipwith the larger ethnic groups who have control over the machinery of government" (5). This defines the position of the Federal Government of Nigeria and local watchdogs in the devaluation of existence in the region. They collaborate with the imperialists in the form of multi-national oil conglomerates to enslave the region, including her people.

YoussouphaMane avers that ". . . the postcolonial endless race for money by all means necessary becomes the unique plague that makes worse the degradation of the natural world. They extract money from this natural environment and refrain themselves from taking care of it" (6). The avaricious capitalist strides of the imperialists negatively affect the environment and since postcolonial studies, according to M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, is "the critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and the mode of discourse that is specific to former colonies . . . (277), there is a nexus between postcolonialism and ecocriticism as the environment itself is suffering the same fate as the former colonies even after independence. This is aptly extrapolated in Rob Nixon's"Environmentalism and Postcolonialism":

> Non-Western environmental movements are typically alert to the independence of survival and environmental change in situations where the illusion of static purity cannot be sustained, far less exalted as an ideal. Such movements are also typically aware of how easily foreign forces—transnational corporations, the World Bank, or NGOS, often in cahoots with authoritarian regimes—can destroy the delicate, always mutable, mesh between cultural traditions, social justice, and ecosystem. (720)

Byron Caminero-Santangelo in "Different Shades of Green: Ecocriticism and African Literature" reveals the unavoidable link between environment and politics. He affirmed that the depiction and treatment of the environment is conditioned by the political situation as ". . . all representations of the environment are constructions tied to power . . ." (700). The Niger Delta region is a politically disadvantaged region in Nigeria but it issustaining the economy of the country through her crude oil wealth. Her people do not have a say in the natural wealth in this region as they are pushed to the margin even as their environment—their only source of livelihood, is rudely destroyed. To Caminero-Santangelo, "in the context of colonial and postcolonial Africa, it is difficult to dismiss [the] . . . relationship between environmentalism and imperialism (700). The greed demonstrated by Western imperialists and their Nigerian counterpartsand theway they see the people and environment of Niger Delta find expression in this paper as it comes with the reaction of the people, especially the women.

Textual Analysis:

May Ifeoma Nwoye's *Oil Cemetery and* Ngozi Chuma-Udeh's *Forlorn Fate*

The lot of the Niger Delta region is a fate that is forlorn. This engineered the multiplicity of creative and critical works in reverence to the region. Presumably, the tide of literally scholarship in Nigeria and Africa at large is towing toward the enigmatic situation of the Niger Delta environment and people in recent times. This is a proof of the proposition of earlier African scholars, such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi WaThiongo, Wole Soyinka, Steven E Ogude, Charles Nnolin, and AbiolaIrele, that African literature defies "art for art's sake''. So, the Niger Delta creates an epoch making scholarly and critical havenbecause the suffering of both human beings and the environment command the repositioning and redirection of the literally focus and attention.

The novels show Niger Delta region as underprivileged and certain forces are culpable of the incessant and ruthless degradation and destruction of lives in the region. The relationship between the people of the region and the oil companies placed this environmental discourse within the nexus of Fanon's postcolonial "Self and Other" as lives and existence of the people are considered as nothing important because the Other is the ''not self. ''The Other by definition lacks identity, propriety, purity, literality'' (Afaf Ahmed Hasan AI-saidi, 95). The level of inhuman and slavish treatment the region suffers, to the novelists, May Ifeoma Nwoye and Ngozi Chuma-Udeh is the "not self" conception of the imperialists and their local watchdogs.

Ngozi Chuma-Udeh's*Forlorn Fate*weaves the tale of the destructive nature of the oil seismic companies. This, to the novelist, is a deliberate way of scaring and searing the people of the Delta using Odua kingdom as its microcosm. The filmic representation is shown as the novelrecreates the angst, panic, pain of the people through the deadly explosion that hit the kingdom as orchestration by Mr. Murray who considered the people of the kingdom as worthless and valueless and since they hold no identity and substance in the world around him, they can go and die for all he cares. This informs his reckless explosives rocked on the entire community. The farmers run helter-skelter from their farms, groping their way to the village, breaking legs and sustaining other injuries in the process. The palm wine tapper seems to be the most affected as he fell off from the palm tree due to fear. The people lightly conceived that there is trouble locking around them that is nearer than they think. This is how the narrator puts it:

> In fact, the seismic sounds touched every nook and cranny of the kingdom bearing one single message DANGER. This message was not new to the indigenes inhabiting this kingdom; it first reared its head the very day, some strange faces-some white men, accompanied by black men who were obviously neither from their kingdom, nor from any of the adjoining communities stormed the sleepy village of Odua. The strangers, both the white men and their black companions bore an evil aura around them. (23)

This is the unfortunate situation of the people of the region. The novels reveal that there has never been a mutual relationship between the host communities and oil exploration companies. The companies are often forced on them to decimate their land or they are tricked to fight themselves and, in the process, greedy fellows will sign MOUs with the companies to start exploration. The lack of proper negotiation and agreement between the companies and host communities seems to be one of the major reasons for the dastardly and inhuman attitude of the companies toward the indigenes. Chief KodjoTimipre's role affirms the above in Chuma-Udeh'snovel and it cuts across several narratives on the region. Rebecca Ufuoma Daviesaffirms that the Niger Delta novel deal with "the complex social, political, and environmental issues that the people of the region face …"(179).

The supposed struggle for emancipation of the land and people of the Niger Delta by some self-acclaimed activist is only geared toward satisfying their stomach infrastructure. The enrichment of the few puppet leaders for the impoverishment of the generality of the people of the region is a calculated ploy by the oil companies. The oil companies plant and nurture the seed of discord and dissension so as to avoid whatever prize they are meant to pay for the damages done to the inhabitants of the region through the destruction of the environment. It is unfortunate that even when people in the community know about Chief KodjoTimipre'suntrustworthiness, the oil company is interested in negotiating with him as the middleman. ''Borokiri the palm wine tapper'' (*Fate* 21) gives a hint on the personality of Chief KodjoTimipre corroborated by the narrator:

> KodjoTimipre had always been the black sheep in the cabinet. He had loyal blood running in his veins but he was always the fox in the house. [. . .] it was whispered, behind his back though, that madness and severe hotheadedness ran in his family. [. . .] KodjoTimipre was

> the only one who tried vehemently to persuade the cabinet to accept the rich offer the white men were making. (26)

Timipre is a replica of other frontline intermediaries between the oil companies and the host communities. The oil companies pay compensation but the local stooges following the steps of the oil company executives, see their people as less than human so they often hijack these monies. May Ifeoma Nwoye gives a vivid representation of the heinous fellows who act as intermediaries in the Niger Delta as reflected in her work. The Men of the Alphabet are referenced here. The element of mimicry as extrapolated by Franz Fanon in his *Wretched of the Earth*relating to Self and Other is manifested in the novel. As local watchdogs for foreign owners, these men tend to mimic the despicable attitude of their masters by degrading the lives of every other person to a state of nobody. The ruthlessness that is exhibited by Timipre can be read in relation to mimicry because geologist Murray is seenas the foundation upon which Timipre's blocks stand so he imitates his evil ways:

> Murray was one of the world's most shrewd geologists and he could predict with accuracy the effect of oil drilling on the ecosystem of these communities within the next few decades. Nonetheless, who cares about the fate of the natives while there was oil lying fallow like an untouched virgin in the soil wasting away? (125)

The Men of Alphabet and Mr. Jefferson's chief domestic guard, Akpuruka, and Chief KodjoTimipre are equally of the opinion that nothing affects them so long as they got ransom money from the oil companies and share it amongst themselves. This betrays the place of the male intermediaries between the host communities and the oil companies.These male intermediaries claim to fight for the environment and people of the region but their struggle in the name of the environment is for personal gratification. Since there are no precautionary measures, the constant degradation has turned the space inhabitable. This is exasperated by the ceaseless raids and gas explosions that rock these communities, thereby making them desolate like cemeteries.

BoisJunior metaphorically refers to his apartment a cemetery due to loneliness whereas, they starve the people ofthe Delta region to death through the crude explorative activities. They parceled loads of illness to kill the people. The wealth got from the exploration is accruing from the ill health, pains and death, of the people. The raids and ruthless murder of the inhabitants has actually turned the

region to a cemetery and not the metaphorical representation of Bois juniors. Ifeoma May puts it thus:

> Another wave of agony swept through the community; each time, more pathetic than before. Both the husband and wife were buried near the disaster ground. The community named the place THE OIL CEMENTARY, because it harboured the bodies of their sons and daughters, brought down by the greed for oil. (126)

The death rate from a single explosion and the deliberate murder of children in the police raid to protect the oil companies creates a cemetery as countless bodies are buried in a particular place and all of them died due to oil exploration. The oil spill and explosion fried hundreds of persons and the cause is always attributed to militancy and vandalism. This is the fate of the people in the other side of the divides; they are to be blamed for the mistakes and carelessness of the companies. The massacre is not of any concern to Mr. Jefferson (who Nwoye uses as a representation of the exploiters of the Niger Delta). He is only bothered about the monetary loss incurred from the loss of oil and the maintenance expenditure. Even when innocent children are murdered through the explosion, the oil companies seem not to be worried because the wasted lives are the "not us". Their only interest is the oil money they get through the destruction of the environment. Mr. Jefferson, addressing the others in the meeting of the host communities' delegation and oil companies' directors says; "as you are aware, our operations have been shut off for close to one week. That if translated to money could mean millions of dollars (295)". This height of inhuman display only confirms the "less-than-human" conceptualization of the people in the psyche of the expatriates. Sensing the antics of the oil companies operating in the region, the women seek for ways to reclaim their environment.

There is a stern variation with the way women deal with the burden of the people in the Niger Delta. Nwoye and Chuma-Udeh reveal, the women exhibit a level of patiencebecause they do not react immediately to their plight. Theyenduredeprivation, lossof source of livelihood—fishing and farming, becoming widows and childless through the destruction of the environment and the military raids that kill their children and husbands. These experiences only point to the over-bearing and patient nature of the women. Nwoye's *Oil Cemetery*reveals the experiences of widows who are affected mostly:

> Tying her child behind her back, she cursed the oil companies and their collaborators. Some murmured that this woman had cried continuously, day and night, for six weeks. Her farmland, her only source of livelihood, had been taken away from her because some pipe passed through that portion of the land. some of the other women gathered around her, listening to her complains. She was not alone. There were many other people with similar tales of woes. (86-87)

Considering the level of anguish these women endure, one is saddled with the thinking of how individuals could bear such level of degeneration, disrespect, pains, trauma and deception from people that are fended for from the resources that is got from them.Jide Balogun in "OgagaIfowodo's Poetry and the Struggle for Emancipation in the Niger Delta" summarily explicates the plight of the people in the region, thus:

> The indigenes of that part of Nigeria appear completely made miserable in all ramification even in the land to which they have been naturally endowed and planted. As a matter of fact, the people of the NDR (Niger Delta Region) do not have access to any meaningful social, political and economic comfort despite the availability of abundance of wealth symbolized in their oil deposits and reserves. (560)

The attended pain compels the women to react. Rita takes it upon herself to share in the pains of her helpless people and to render the needed assistance in the fight to salvage the land and people of the region. As if this was her innate ability, before the death of the stunt union leader (Steve Dada), she stood up to analyze the situation of the suffering people in the region and her speech elicits different responses from the union leadership and members in their meeting. As reflected in the novel, the Niger Delta region is replete with several problems, a calculated ploy by the oil companyexecutives to keep the inhabitants of the region busy and redirect their attention from the nefarious activities of the companies. Rita is struck with the tragedy of the death of uncle Steve Dada and the spillage that records scores of deaths. These issues do not deter her, she opts to seek for the aid of the law to address the pains and suffering of her people. With the help of mr.Timi, she meets with a team of Human Rights Activists. Even Steve's friend,Timi backs the decision of Rita to fight for her people. He succinctly

recounts the plight of the people and the need to announce the greed of the oil companies to the world:

> These oil companies do their business with arrogance and impunity. They occupy people's land and offer the locals only cheap menial jobs, yet they have no regard for the environment where these businesses are done, let alone the people's health. It is time to let the world know about what is happening. (131)

The confidence and support Rita get from Timi—the lawyers, and her people, increase her vigour to fight for her people.

Rita files a case against Zebulum Oil as the women struggle, for the inhabitants of the Niger Delta to assert their humanity, self-respect and to re-green their environment, against the exploitation of the oil companies. They exhibit and carry the spirit of unity as they take different dimensions to the struggle. The equally stopped the oil companies from operations in the region in a subtle way:

> One of the older women who had the imposing figure of a leader dared to raise her voice to whoever cared to listen, "today, the women have spoken! No more drilling, no more gas flaring, no more extraction until all our demands are met. No form of work for gas workers, many of whom have ran away at the sight of the nude women. No further activity on our land until we are duly compensated! Everything must stop! We must secure the future of our children—it's now or never!" (192)

Even in hunger, the women persevered and stayed resolute to the cause. They never betrayed the cause for any reason unlike their male counterparts. Rita is offered bribe by the oil companies through the puppet intermediaries (men of the alphabet) but she refuses the offer and show her displeasure to her father who collected the money on her behalf and askshimto return the money. Seeing the disposition of the women and their courage, the king with a gladdened heart clearly distinguished the struggle of the women for the liberation of their land and people from those of the greedy men:

> He was proud of his female subjects. "The exploitation of our land has troubled us men for many years, but nothing had come out of it, he remarked. Why? Because of

> selfishness and greed! But now the women have taken control and the oil companies are on their knees!" (201)

He earnestly prays for them to succeed and they did.The nude protest of the women yields massive result because the oil companies collaborates to build schools, drinkable water, hospitals, and roads even before the completion of the court case. This compels the reassessment of the position of womenin the struggle for the liberation of the land and people of the Niger Delta. Jonathan Bate draws a link between the earth and woman. He avers that "the image of the earth as a violated woman . . . strike a chord with the feminist critics . . . (29). The earnest, honest and swift response of the women in the novel can be attributed to their affinity to the earth.

Rita and the other women are resolute but obedient and law abiding. The disaster that storms her community comes with varied reactions even to the extent of kidnapping and murdering of Mr. Jefferson's wife, Brenda. *Oil Cemetery*and other eco-novels such as Habila's*Oil on Water*, Okpewho's*Tides*, Agary's*Yellow-Yellow*, Garricks' *Tomorrow Died yesterday*, and Chuma-Udeh's*Forlorn Fate*see kidnapping, murder, gun battling, and pipeline vandalism as attributesof the male activist that struggle for the regeneration of the Niger Delta environment. Mabel I. E. Evwierhoma and Rose AndeYacim affirm that "the Niger Delta region . . . has been synonymous with violence, hostage taking, economic sabotage as in oil bunkering and other incidents that are seen as antipeace in Nigeria in general but pro people in the region. . . . the characters marshaled for the correction project (to the region) are mainly male" (262).

The diligence and the openness of the female activist commands obedience from the men and the spirit of unity and teamwork help to achieved the desired result. A striking quality of women is their demand for schools, hospitals, roads, reclamation of their land, employment opportunities and drinkable water, that is worthy of applause. The intervention of the women in the activism changed the tide of the narrative. They create peace through their protest and the litigation against the oil companies. Paying attention to the needs of the people by the oil companies makes things easy for both parties. Mr. Jefferson realises that it is easier to satisfy the host communities than to pay local watchdogs to protect their interest which makes peace illusive. In his speech, Mr. Jefferson at the commissioning ceremony of the school project applauds the women and pledges a better relationship with the host communities.Women are deployed as agencies in the narrative.

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin see agency as ". . . particularly important in post-colonial theory because it refers to the ability of post-colonial subjects to initiate action in engaging or resisting imperial power" (6). The above defines the character of Nina—a US soldier sent to rescue a kidnapped oil executive, Bois Senior,is characterized as the saviour of the people of Odua Kingdom in *Forlorn Fate*. She reveals Mr. Murraysantics of destroying the environment and youths to have total control of the region without any form of protest from the inhabitants. While in school he often lures them with money and use them to do his dirty jobs of kidnapping and murder of rival oil company executives in the region. He does this without an iota of humanity and guilt as he considers the locals as "less than human". When Nina asked Dickson (AKA Cobra), if he is to be killed for militancy, his response reveals that Mr. Murray only uses them as baits. Dickson tells Nina that his lot is death and nothing more; "No . . . Not yet, but even if the court does not condemn me, I am as good as dead. The Creek Face will see to it that I do not come out of here alive. That is the routine. Once you are caught . . ." (89).The culture of Mr. Murray is to bribe the prison warders to poison any of the youths from the Niger Delta that finds himself in prison for the crimes he compels them to commit. The fate of Dickson and his colleagues are sealed before Nina's intervention. She swiftly moves to action and ordered their release after series of interrogation and revelations. This brings her to the frontline of activism for the restoration of her people and land.

Coming back to her root, she is made to understand the pains of her people and the inhuman treatment they suffer from the hands of oil company executives. She keeps wondering, the kind of human beings that direct oil companies to unleash colossal damage in an environment where there are lives. This disturbing issue settled her in with the desire to help her people. The narrator reveals:

> She promised herself that she would look into the matter after her mission. She would draw the attention of notable international bodies and NGOs to the plight of the Kingdom. She was not going to overlook such irreverence to human life, be it her yet to be proven ancestral home or not. It was obvious the company would subsume this community of people. Why should they go into extinction due to oil mining? (251)

Though, Nina prized her rescue mission initially above other issues but following Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin position on agency in postcolonial studies, her mission is the rescue of the land and people of the Niger Delta. Her presence in Odua Kingdom with Cobra and Skeleton send waves of fright to the middlemen and Mr. Murray so, he plans the final damnation of the whole kingdom. He believes that any life that survives it is compelled to leave the kingdom for good. The desire of the multi-nationals and the Nigerian State is to render the people of the region insignificant. They want total control of the crude oil resources and the wealth that accrue from it. This informs the plot to pursue the people from the region. The novel reveals that most oil spills are coordinated, calculated, planned and executed by the companies for this purpose and they heap the blame on the harmless indigenes who are murdered through the spills. They arrest those that survive the contaminated waters and carbonated air and brutalized them. All these are ways to have the nature's gift of the people. Mr. Murray ". . . signed and sealed the fate of the villagers on that paper. He would flush them into the sea with oil spill. The Nigerian nation would simply record one of the greatest oil spills in the history of mankind (283)". This is the land Nina has come to save. Since Nina's presence is becoming discomforting, Mr. Murray, just as he normally does with the inhabitants of the region, seeks ways to kill her. She fights side by side with Cobra and Skeleton and they kill almost all the impersonating soldiers of the Nigerian State which Mr. Murray created to unleash trouble and destroy the people.

Nina had a premonition on the actions of Mr. Murray so she tasksher army to protect the land and people of the Delta by digging trenches around the village to store the oil that is deliberately spilled by Mr. Murray. He calls it the final blow (*operation flush the vermin* 363) and has already informed the press about the spill in the morning. His plan fails because the trenches stored the oil and everyone in the kingdom is given the opportunity to have a fill of the crude oil that had doomed them in the past and to own it in large quantities for personal use and sale. KodjoTimipre reports to Mr. Murray that his planned destruction of the people has turned advantageous to them as they are celebrating their new-found wealth in oil through his final uncontainable spill:

> … the villagers were on a merry business of containment and recovery of the free phase oil. He said they were right then, storing the crude oil in every available container upon which Geologist Murray, for the first time since his

> coming to Odua, charged into the village with the remaining of his minions. (347)

It dawned on Nina that she is sent by providence to help save her people (the people of Odua in particular and the Niger Delta in general). She confessed to this when Mr. Murray asks of her personality.

Conclusion

Nwachukwu Agbada in his "Soil, Oil and Foil: Isidore Okpewho's Tidal Victims in Niger Delta Novel of Environment", believes that "the Niger delta has become both a geographical space and social constituent in the Nigerian lexicography of agitation for justice" (2). A volatile spacedue to the wanton exploitation of the natural resources, oil and the unmitigated neglect of the people of the land.The two novels attend to the same issues of degradation, the suffering of the people of the region, the inhuman treatment they received from the oil companies because the land and people are considered as the "not self" by oil company executives and Nigerian Government.The different forms of protest against the companies for the re-greening of the land, the failure of the struggles that are spare-headed by the male activists due to greed and avarice and the success of the women's struggle because of their unity and the desire to save the land and people. These issues are differently handled by the novelists as shown in the analysis. The paper concludes that the Niger Delta people are occupying a less than human status in the heart of the expatriates. This consideration justifies the ill-treatment that is meted out on the people of the region and that their suffering is aggravated by the greedy attitude of some male intermediaries,who while fighting for the environment works for their personal gain as they mimic the whites thereby contributing their own quota to the suffering of the inhabitants. The situation, to the novelists, can be ameliorated with the active and unbiased peaceful participation of women in the political activities in the region.

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