

THE REALIST TRADITION IN NIGERIAN LITERATURE: AN ECO
CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MICHAEL PEEL'S *A SWAMP FULL OF
DOLLARS* AND TANURE OJAIDE'S *THE ACTIVIST*

BY

ROSEMARY AJIBOGWU OJONE

NSU/ART/MA/LIT/137/12/13

BEING AN M.A. DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF
POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN
LITERATURE

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TITLE PAGE

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APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been read and approved as meeting the requirements of the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria for the award of a Master of Arts (M.A) Degree in Literature.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation has been written by me and it is a report of my research work. It has not been presented, in part or whole, in any institution for a degree or any certificate elsewhere. All quotations or citations are indicated herein and sources of information specifically acknowledged by means of referencing.

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NSU/ARTS/M.A/137/13/14

Sign/Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty for blessing me with great parents- Arc.& Mrs. David Ajibogwu.

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Gratitude to God for his numerous blessings, mercy and love. Most especially for the grace to complete this essay. Thanks to my Mum and Dad, and Siblings for your kindness and affection.

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ABSTRACT

In the light of recent global concerns over climate change, global warming, natural and manmade disasters etc, it has become necessary to establish the root causes of these problems. This research work pins the problem on environmental degradation. By adopting a maximalist approach to environmental issues as opposed to the minimalist, this research work has treated all issues as emanating from the degradation of the total environment. Isolating the Niger Delta experience, the recurring problems of corruption, insurgency and ethnic clashes in Nigeria have been identified and traced to the incursion of oil exploration and exportation following the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Using the ecocritical approach to literary studies, the research investigated the psychology of the victimised in the Niger Delta through the terror unleashed by the victimiser and the psychology of the predator in the attempt to rationalize latter's actions. The research concluded that the tendency towards violence as a means to resolve crisis has emanated from the desire of man to exert control over natural resources. The examination used two categories that emanate from the socio-political problems in the Niger Delta: the faction of Peel, and the fiction of Ojaide. The essay has stressed the need to employ dialogue in resolving the key issues of resource control and derivation formula to resolve the crisis. In all, the research emphasized the integral place of the quality of life led by a people which can only be guaranteed by the resolution of the issues of corruption, inequality and extreme hierarchies institutionalized in Nigeria which mitigate against development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preliminaries

Title Page-----	i
Approval Page-----	ii
Declaration-----	iii
Dedication-----	iv
Acknowledgements-----	v
Abstract-----	vi
Table of Contents-----	vii

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1	Background to the Study-----	1
1.2	Statement of the Problem-----	3
1.3	Aim and Objectives of the Study-----	4
1.4	Scope of the Study-----	4
1.5	Significance of the Study-----	5
1.6	Research Method-----	5
1.7	Brief Biographies of Michael Peel and Tanure Ojaide-----	6
1.8	Niger Delta and Oil Exploration: Culture and Ecology-----	7
1.9	Rhetoric of Environmentalism: From Isaac Boro to Ken Saro Wiwa-----	9

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

2.0	Preamble-----	15
2.1	Ecocriticism as an Emerging theory-----	15
2.2	Ecocriticism as a theory-----	18

2.3	Critical Comments on Tanure Ojaide Works and Empirical Review of Related Literature on the Niger Delta-----	20
2.4	Dialectics of Resistance: Eco-Terrorism-----	27
2.5	Theoretical Framework-----	32

CHAPTER THREE

Textual Analysis

3.0	Preamble-----	34
3.1	Synopsis of Tanure Ojaide's <i>The Activist</i> -----	34
3.2	The Realist Tradition in <i>The Activist</i> -----	35
3.3	Violence as the Currency of Resistance-----	39
3.4	Globalization as Decoy of Imperialism-----	43
3.5	Eco-Feminism in <i>The Activist</i> -----	47

CHAPTER FOUR

Textual Analysis

4.0	Preamble-----	51
4.1	Synopsis of <i>A Swamp Full of Dollars</i> -----	51
4.1.1	The Concept of Truth in <i>A Swamp Full of Dollars</i> -----	52
4.1.2	The impacts of Global Oil Politics on the Niger Delta-----	54
4.3	Dialectics of Environmentalism in the Niger Delta-----	57
4.4	Rhetoric of Development in <i>A Swamp Full of Dollars</i> -----	61

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary and Conclusion

5.1	Summary-----	65
5.2	Conclusion-----	67

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Preamble

Contemporary Nigerian literature is, for the most part, politically and socially committed because it is a commentary on the social issues that have significant bearing on the society. Contemporary Nigerian writers are therefore concerned with charting a new course to progress. This research represents the response of writers on recurrent socio-political reality of their time. Socio political themes such as poverty, corruption, bunkering, kidnapping, government's dishonesty, environmental degradation pre-dominate the texts employed in the study. Where the writers reflect these realities, the research evaluates the extent of commitment to the plight of their society, particularly as it impacts the environment.

This introductory chapter contains the research design, study area, history of the study area and the theoretical orientation adopted for interpretation of selected texts.

1.1 Background to the Study

Nature and Literature are closely related. Nature has been said to be a phenomenon that inspires the writer. This is reflected in the evocative imagery of nature inherent in some works of art. However, with the evolution of literature and its preoccupation, there has been a shift from the glorification of nature to contemporary issues of socio-economic exploitation, class struggle and other forms of injustices in the society that have captured the attention of writers. The captivating effect of nature on the creative mind has seized and is instead been replaced by images of the stark destruction of its elements. Writers have assumed a sharpened consciousness, such that they cannot remain indifferent to the abuse of industrialization, urbanization and the very essence of human existence. The threat to the environment and its attendant problems became one and the same. The nostalgic representation of nature abruptly shifted to the lament of the waste of the land, as signalled in the departure from the romantic tradition to the realist tradition of Victorian era. This coincided with the birth of the genre of fiction, laden with chronicling emerging issues of industrialization, urbanization and social inequalities.

In Nigeria, colonialism led to the destruction of pastoral life and communalism, ultimately introducing individualism in the society. After all, in the wake of industrialization, the environment was altered, introducing a false sense of superiority that translated into institutionalized hierarchies in the society. The total modification of the environment to suit

man is predicated on egocentric specicism which stimulated the domination of perceived weaker species, which in turn eliminated the symbiotic relationship that existed prior to the incursion of 'civilization'. In Africa, human obeisance to earthly elements was dismissed as superstition and identified as savage fetishism. Greed and survival of the fittest, antecedents of individualism, flourished and binaries like majority/minority, lower/upper, superior/inferior, etc, became paradigms for ranking in the society. In Nigeria, for instance, dichotomies like majority/minority culminated into ethnic and tribal crises that threaten the cohesive existence of the entity, Nigeria. The point we are trying to make is that, the introduction of borders fuelled monopoly in the society with humans in constant struggle to lay claims to natural resources within 'their borders'. An infused threat of marginalization motivated different regions to fight for assertion as they assumed ownership and sought to participate in economic and political sphere dominated by a select group (the upper class). This explains the sustained tempo of crises in the society and perhaps accounts for different secessionist attempts in Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Literary scholarship and its preoccupation with contemporary issues have pushed to the background the root of socio-economic problems. That is, the destruction of the environment through industrialization and commercialization of natural resources. This introduced an oppressive system and distorted the ideal ways of life of the society and should be at the core of literary scholarship. However, consumed by the realities of the core, other issues take centre stage while the issue of ecological degradation is often treated as a sub-theme. Hence, the call to return to the history of society is necessary to create a perspective that would highlight the origin of the woes of humanity. The study identifies individualism as the factor that led to the fight for the right to self-assertion, which is the forerunner of capitalism and motivation of monopoly in contemporary society. The research pins the origin of contemporary realities to the violation of nature; ultimately culminating in the distortion of human culture and destruction of values.

The work also uncovers the internal contradictions that characterize the methods employed by crusades of environmentalism. Military approach in the Niger Delta for instance is irreconcilable with the mantra of restoration of lost vegetation, security and stability in the

region. The research identifies these inherent contradictions as counterproductive to the fight of justice in the environment.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study is targeted at awakening the consciousness of writers and readers alike, on the integral role of nature in the cosmic order, as highlighted in its impact on the socio economic reality of any geography. This is reinforced in Michael Peel's *A Swamp Full of Dollars* and Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist*. This is aimed at inducing a sense of advocacy for the preservation of the environment.

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. Expose the contradictions in the activities of the militants in the Niger Delta, and their adverse effects on the environment.
- ii. Highlight how the exploitation of nature to foster human socio-economic activities accounts for the woes in the society.
- iii. Reinforce the realist tradition that believes that contemporary writers have a common goal to use their work as socio-political commentary, so as to invoke positive responses towards change.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study centres on the Nigerian society, using the Niger Delta as a microcosm in order to understand its contemporary socio-economic realities. Although limited to Nigeria, the environmental commitment of other writers from other regions would be reviewed.

The dissertation is limited to the analysis of one text each by Michael Peel and Tanure Ojaide. The discussion isolates the environmental commitments and socio-economic relations in *A Swamp Full Of Dollars* and *The Activist*. The emphasis is on the implication of oil exploration and production on the immediate community-Niger Delta, and Nigeria at large.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Although there are existing works on the implications of the destruction of the Niger Delta's eco-system on the socio-economic life of the people, where reprisal acts by youths of the community have been endorsed and reinforced by writers and critics alike, this study interprets such acts as terrorism. This work examines the relationship between the capitalists' exploitation of the environment and the different instruments of protest like bunkering, vandalism etc, with the eco system and interpret both as terrorism. The social conditions and the reality of devastation of the environment notwithstanding, writers and critics alike seem to be taking sides with different elements acting out against the environment which leaves the eco-system at the receiving end of all forms of exploitation. The area of divergence in the approach adopted by the research lies in the articulation of the tenets of the responses of writers that recommends a symbiotic relationship between man and the physical landscape. The work also draws a parallel between the activities of the capitalists and the militants. This is particularly important as the security of the country is at stake with different insurgent groups springing up. Similarly, Nigeria is not immune to the global threat of desertification arising from rapid urbanization and the fear of global warming associated with climate change and these issues need to be critically treated to enable generation of solutions.

On the whole, this research work contributes to the body of materials in eco-study and opens up new frontiers of knowledge. The outcome of this study hopefully would serve as reference material for students and others interested in the field. It is hoped that the study would qualitatively increase the volume of ecocritical literature available.

1.6 Research Method

Since the research is library based, its primary sources are: a text by Michael Peel and a novel by Tanure Ojaide, *A Swamp Full Of Dollars* and *The Activist*, respectively. Secondary materials were sourced from existing literature on Ecocriticism and its role as a theory; published works also aided empirical review of texts under study. Journal articles and internet sources will also serve as tertiary sources for the study. Works consulted have been cited properly and correctly.

1.7 Brief Biographies of Michael Peel and Tanure Ojaide

The understanding of the life of an author helps highlight the pervading ideology of a work. The motivation grounds the mood, prejudices are exposed and credibility is amplified. Michael Peel is a journalist of British origin. He was educated at Trinity College, Oxford, where he studied Chemistry. Peel joined the 'Financial Times' of London in 1996 and was the West Africa correspondent based in Lagos, Nigeria, from 2002-2005. The only biography available on Michael Peel is that on Wikipaedia. However, his twitter handle shows he is a journalist with particular interest in war prone areas around the globe where he interrogates the roots of the crises by interacting with his selected subjects. His book, *A Swamp Full of Dollars* is an expansion of his travel reports and memoir while in Nigeria.

Although, not a creative writer, Peel combines the artistry of literary journalism and a British sense of humour to deliver a narrative that uses irony to drive his points home. To have a balanced reportage, Peel's profession requires interaction with every subject that features in his story and this serves as a great resource he employed in his writing.

There are lots of materials on Tanure Ojaide. However, his life is best captured in his autobiography, *Delta Blues*, where he states that,

My roots run deep into the Delta area [...] My Delta years have become a touchstone with which I measure the rest of my life. The streams, the fauna and the floral are the symbols I continually tap. Even when I wander the many places I have experienced, that land of streams, the Iroko trees, antelopes, anthills and so much life remain indelible in my memory and imprinted in my thoughts. Home remains to me the Delta, where I continue to anchor myself (15).

This concise excerpt gives a background of Tanure Ojaide. Born in the oil rich Niger Delta of Nigeria in 1948 to a rubber plantation farmer, and dealer in palm oil, and a mother that survived on fishing and retail sales, Ojaide spent most of his childhood with his maternal grandmother in Ibada village. Educated under the catholic missionary system for his elementary stages, he proceeded to the University of Ibadan where he was awarded a Bachelor's Degree in English. He subsequently received his M.A in Creative Writing and Ph.D in English from Syracuse University. Ojaide is an internationally acclaimed writer

renowned for his rigorous criticism of imperialism. His advocacy for the environmental restoration of the Niger Delta and critique of government policies occupy a central position in his works.

Niger Delta and Oil Exploration: Culture and Ecology

The culture of a people is largely determined and influenced by their immediate environment. The environment, to a great extent impacts the mode of dressing, the local food and the occupation of a people. The means of livelihood of a people, which is its economic life, provides a base for other activities that constitute its culture. Traditional artefacts are derived from the resources in their immediate environment. The representation of the life of a people, which is the pre-occupation of literature, thrives on its history, which is mapped along its socio-economic life as determined by its environmental evolution. Therefore, it goes without debate that, people and their environment interrelate and act on each other. It is thus not surprising that, an insight into the origin, culture and traditions of a society would foster the re-construction of its history, which is the core task of a writer whose quest is to understand its present reality. The writer provides a frame for the present reality by answering questions like, what did a people do before now? How has the environment been tamed or modified to suit the present outcome? If it has been modified, then to what extent?

The culture of the people of the Niger Delta of Nigeria is determined by the configuration of its environment. Historically, an agrarian population because almost fifty percent of its land mass is covered by water, they thrive on fishing, farming and trade. The area is a land of about 75,000 square metres mostly covered by water, with an estimated population of about 30 million people, which accounts for its dense population. According to Kadafa Adati, 'The Niger Delta consists of diverse eco systems of mangrove swamps, fresh water swamp, rain forests and is the largest wetland in Africa and among the ten most important wetlands and marine eco systems in the world'(1).

The community depended on its lush vegetation for its livelihood. The natural landscape of the Niger Delta accounted for its survival up until the scramble for Africa. Strategically located along the Atlantic coastal line, they made their debut in the slave trade or as Karl Maier coined, 'The Human Business'. Prior to their induction into the human

business, the economy of the area was solely based on fishing, farming and inter-regional barter trade system between them and their immediate neighbours, the Igbos. However, with the coming of the Europeans, the communities of Bonny and Calabar began trading in slaves. Maier recounts that, 'When the Europeans came shopping for slaves, however, the Ijaws adapted quickly, moving from trading with the Igbos to selling them' (119). The light mood with which Maier presents this situation should not undermine its import, as this formed the basis for the estrangement between the two regions as reflected in Biafra history.

The abolition of the Slave Trade notwithstanding, the West grew thirstier for the means to sustain its industries, and with the proceeds garnered from Slave Trade, the frantic exploration for lubricants for their industries began and the Niger Delta with its deposits of palm oil was at the centre of the quest. This marked the commercialization of natural resources from the area and the establishment of international trade relations between capitalists from both regions. Years after, the people of the Niger Delta would refer to this encounter with despair at its negative impact on their environment.

Rapid industrialization following World War 2 gave rise to a quest for an alternative source of lubricants other than palm oil, which eventually led to the discovery of crude oil. In 1956, oil was discovered in commercial quantity in Oloibiri; 'Nigeria's first casualty of the Oil and Gas Industry' (Tamuno,5) and followed by its exportation in 1958. Christened Oil River Protectorate, the Niger Delta became the hub of the Nigerian economy since the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern economies in 1914. This left the area at the mercy of national policies that could care less about the degradation of its environment by activities of multi nationals involved in Oil Exploration. According to Amnesty International,

Under Nigerian law, local communities have no legal right to gas in their territory. The Federal Government allocates permits, licences and leases to survey, prospect for and extract oil to the oil companies, who are then automatically granted access to the land covered by the permits, lease or licence (9).

The naked disregard for the rights of the people of the region and its environment reported by Amnesty International went unnoticed in the desperation of the government to exert its control. Historically known for its reputation of human rights violation, the cry of the people on the death of the region's eco-system was disregarded by the Government. This engendered

a heightened level of criticism of the coalition between the local government and European imperialists. As a result, there was born different movements with different levels of advocacy for the Niger Delta environment. This featured key players like Isaac Boro and Ken Saro Wiwa, whose different levels and approaches to activism inspired writers like Tanure Ojaide, Eddie Iroh, Odia Ofemun and their contemporaries.

The major thrust of these movements was the critique of the adverse effects of oil exploration on the environment. Fishing and farming activities of the area reduced drastically as a result of significant mortality of aquatic life and vegetation loss attributed to the increase in deforestation, geological excavation and survey. Over-time, this led to the reality of economic docility of the native community. Poverty became a new order because the source of livelihood of the people had been altered. Nigerian writers like Ahmed Yerima, Kaine Agary and Niyi Osundare articulate this history and imaginatively portray the different stages of this crisis, reinforcing the pervading ideology or introducing an alternative hegemony.

Rhetorics Of Environmentalism: From Isaac Boro to Ken SaroWiwa

It is true that the environment has effect on its immediate population and it has been widely acknowledged that the Niger Delta has been impoverished in the course of oil exploration, and its natural resource have been lost in the bid to boost Nigeria's economy. The rhetoric of the region's development or non-development is predicated on resistance to oil capitalism that has rendered its eco system sterile and in turn made its economy numb. Activism in the Niger Delta dates back to Isaac Boro, a radical activist of his home environment. His hometown, Oloibiri, was the first to be exposed to the vagaries of oil exploration in 1958(Maier) and so, his activism was borne out of lived experiences. He simply agitated against his community's marginalization by the federal government's development policy. Of course, as characteristic of Federal Military Governments, his protest was dismissed but he soon heralded the movement for the preservation of the entire region. He mobilised youths under the auspices of the Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) and the Niger Delta Oil Council, which called for the independence of the region when it came to its resource and land. This call for fiscal independence was adjudged by The Federal Military Government as a secessionist attempt. Correspondingly, attempts to stifle resistance from the region through military clampdowns by diverse JTFs was embraced, while ignoring the root of the protest,

which was the neglect of the region's environment exposed to pollution as a result of oil spills and gas flares.

Decades after Isaac Boro, the people of the Delta remained at the receiving end of the conspiracy of the economic fusion between the Nigerian state and European companies that have continued to ravage its land and resources. The destruction of its eco-system for the benefit of the national economy sustained the exploitation in the region. The environmental devastation and the issue of wealth distribution provoked activism that led to the formation of The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), pioneered by Ken SaroWiwa; a prominent player in the series of triangular contests (Tamuno, 58) between the '3 elephants; Communities, Companies/Corporations and Country' (Tamuno, 7) in the Niger Delta. Again, the capitalist's ruthless exploration projects and Government's insensitivity as highlighted through its development projects featured in *Kaiama Declaration* of 1998 after the neglect of the *Ogoni Bill of Rights* of 1990. Both documents featured concern over the threat of environmental degradation and pollution and demands for control and ownership of resources from the region. This call however met with strong oppositions from key players in Nigeria because of the role of Oil as key factor in revenue generation. Maier in *This House Has Fallen* notes, "Because national revenues, the so called national cake, were distributed on the basis of population and not according to where it came from, minorities in the Delta had little to show for the riches literally gushing from their land". (54)

The crisis from the Niger Delta has called attention to inequities in the federation's policies like the Minerals/Petroleum Decree of 1969, The Land Use Decree of 1978 among others. These form the major thrust of agitations from the Niger Delta. Point C in the famous *Kaiama Declaration* had highlighted 'the complete lack of ecological rehabilitation' of Ijawland, which had suffered numerous oil spills, uncontrolled gas flaring, indiscriminate canalisation and logging activities amongst others as direct consequences of uncontrolled explorations of crude oil and natural gas, further pinning the problem to resource ownership and control, where the rights of the people to lands and resources had been stolen 'through the instrumentality of undemocratic Nigerian State legislation'. The long drawn out-cry over the despoliation of Ogoni land was, however, neglected by the Federal Military Government.

Ken Saro Wiwa, an activist and prolific writer engaged the global community in rhetoric on the plight of the Niger Delta. He exposed the economic paradox of the Nigerian

state, where the Ogoni race was impoverished to empower other regions socially and economically. In what he called an ‘ecological war’, he drew attention to the looming genocide in the region. To him, the devastation and death of the Niger Delta’s landscape, was one and the same as the extermination of the Ogoni people. This crusade and the corresponding raised consciousness alienated the people from the Government and heralded much debate and criticism ultimately fuelling crisis between the state and region. The estrangement culminated in a misunderstanding of Ken’s advocacy as secessionist intent, which climaxed in his execution in 1995 in an alleged suit of treason to state. Wiwa had simply instigated his supporters not to participate in elections that had no direct impact on them; an extension of his argument on government’s treatment of the region as insignificant. The contradiction is captured by Maier (99) thus, ‘Nine days after the polls, Saro- Wiwa was arrested, ironically, for his activities against an election that the authorities were about to cancel’. Of course, the threat of secession was unfounded as the *Kaiama Declaration* had affirmed, ‘we agreed to remain in Nigeria but to demand and work for self government and resource control for the Ijaw people...’ This statement in itself is not a threat to Nigeria as an entity but rather an indictment of the illegitimate military regimes. Perhaps the fear lay in the hint of United State’s prototype of federalism.

At this point, it would be necessary to emphasise that Wiwa’s effort at drawing the attention of the media and the international community made impact belatedly following his death. Although power brokers assumed a non-committal posture and in their ‘theatrical show of impotence’ (Maier,) endorsed the capitalists’ activity, a series of verification visits had commenced from green conscious organisations and the media. Another of his legacies is that, Wiwa’s rhetoric also shaped a literary preoccupation that is environmentally responsive among writers.

Writers, scholars and critics took up these concerns and the infamous Land Use Decree of 1978 informed by Government’s entitlement mentality assumed centre place. Attention was drawn to the fact that oil accounted for most part of government revenue, which translated to over ninety percent of the national income. Different readings were given to this reality, the post colonialists interpreted it as imperialism arising from bigotry of supposed superior elements over perceived inferior elements, and critics of globalization dismissed it as capitalists’ tactic to enrich their benefactors while the environmentally conscious interpreted it as eco-terrorism. Writers like Ojaide artistically represent this reality

as ecological imperialism. A postmodern approach that captures the two ideologies acting out against his society; the activities of capitalist that culminate in environmental degradation on one hand and the denial of the people's right to control resources within their environment on another. This is evident in his fusion of ecological thoughts with his post-colonial preoccupation that is reflected in most of his works. This grounds the assertion that no phenomenon can stand in isolation, when applied to the reading of texts; there are different approaches that can adequately interrogate and also expose the contradictions inherent in the reality of the situation in the Niger Delta. Forster and Clark while explaining what ecological imperialism means have this to say,

Ecological imperialism thus presents itself most obviously in following ways: the pillage of the resources of some countries by others and the transformation of whole eco systems upon which states and nations depend...the exploitation of ecological vulnerabilities of societies to promote imperialist control; the dumping of ecological wastes in ways that widen the chasm between the periphery; and overall, the creation of a global 'metabolic rift' that characterises the relation of capitalism to the environment, and at the same time limits capitalist development. (187)

This sums up the Niger Delta reality in Nigeria. Where the oil exploited from the region is exported to other countries to fuel their industries and the proceeds garnered are used to develop the centre. In Nigeria, Lagos was transformed first and then, Abuja the new 'centre' was built from the revenue generated from the Niger Delta region to the detriment of its environment negatively modified to access oil; the life-wire of the economy of Nigeria. The resources, which should be a blessing becomes a weakness, and which attracts all forms of negative energies that violate her rights as a community. Tanure Ojaide laments this as an economic paradox where the economic impoverishment of the region translates into unemployment because of the dearth of the physical landscape, the source or means of livelihood of its people. This is further aggravated by the so called development projects of oil companies, which in the opinion of the indigenes fail to make up for the untold destruction of the land.

The injustice of the revenue allocation formula and the inability of government to develop an equitable development plan are at the centre of the country's security challenges.

Exclusion of certain ethnic groups from national development plans has over time encouraged the proliferation of ethnic and regional movements and militias that threaten the cohesive existence of Nigeria as an entity. From the Movement for the Emancipation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of The Niger Delta (MEND), Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Arewa People's Congress (APC), Bakassi Boys (BB), Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA) to Contemporary Boko Haram, the recurring protest has been the concentrated social, economic, educational and political failures of a government that is non-inclusive. The distribution of infrastructure without consideration of the physical landscape, geographical peculiarities, ethnic and religious configuration of different regions poses a threat to Nigeria's unity. Michael Peel projects that militias would continue to spring, except a change is effected to Government's anti people policies.

In conclusion, it is important to point out a major weakness in the environmental campaign of Saro Wiwa, which is the ethnic dimension it took. The Ijaw land is not the only part of the South-south region plagued with the deleterious effects of uncontrolled oil exploration. This, perhaps, explains the stronger front put up by MEND and NDPVF because of its whole coverage of the whole Niger Delta and also partially because of its radical militant method as opposed to the debates and rhetoric of the older generation.

Conceptual Verification

REALISM

The realist's art tradition began around mid- nineteenth. Advocates of the presentation of actualities without embellishment emerged in this era. Realist authors choose to depict every day and ordinary activities instead of illusions. Ian Watt states in *The Rise of the Novel* that realism is founded on the belief that truth can be discovered through the senses. Both *The Activist* and *A Swamp Full of Dollars* respectively tend towards naturalism that uses detailed realism to suggest that social conditions, heredity, and environment have a great impact in shaping human character.

M.H Abraham identified two categories that the realist movement can be identified in a work of art. Only the second which he gives as 'a recurrent mode, in various eras and literary forms, of representing human life and experience in literature.' (269) is suitable to our

study. While for instance romantics like Wordsworth negated the tradition of literary rules of neoclassical era, considered to be too monotonous and stifling of the imagination, and which did not attend to the plight of the common man. Correspondingly, Practitioners of the art crafted an art that would cater for humanity and nature, a balance made possible by the application of naturalism that dwelled on the fatalities that accompanied increased industrial activities in the environment. This response gave rise to the prose genre laden with the task of chronicling these realities in their volumes. However, Contemporary writers are caught up with the present realities confronting humanity and are mostly oblivious to the state of the physical environment.

ANTHROPOCENTRISM

A view that human beings transcends nature and are therefore superior to other elements in the cosmos because they possess souls. M.H Abram clarifies anthropocentric view to include orientation that views the interest of human beings as superior to nature, thereby giving it licence to exploit natural resources and, animal and plant species for the purpose of humanity.

ECOCENTRISM

The view that all living things, including human species, and their habitats occupy the same position in hierarchy. As such, value, political rights and importance should be granted them to preserve their culture and existence.

DIALECTIC

The existence or action of opposing social forces. That is, the contradictory relation that exists between given concepts at play in a given society

The next chapter in this work is iterative of related literature.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Preamble

This chapter considers ecocriticism as a theory. The level of environmental consciousness of the critique of ideology is interrogated. The articulation of environmentalism in selected texts is critically reviewed. Negative and positive reading of existing literature on the topic is attempted. The chapter also explains, in detail, the meaning of concepts under study in line with the theoretical orientation of the research.

2.1 Ecocriticism as an Emerging Theory

It is pertinent to begin this discourse by foregrounding the fact that, Nature cannot be separated from Literature. The growth of the love for nature witnessed in the eighteenth century poetry of Wordsworth hinges on the appreciation of nature. For instance, in their *Lyrical Ballads* which he was a major contributor to, Wordsworth emphasises the need for co-existence between man and nature.

However, his poetry is not totally obsessive with nature as it also captures the plight of man. Hudson and M.H Abraham corroborate this. This background is key to understanding that interest in nature does not necessarily mean a shift from reality neither antithetical to humanity. Even Wordsworth's common definition of poetry being, 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' attests to this. Emotions are reactions, generated either from love, regrets or estrangements. This also brings to mind, the subject of reality, since no writer writes in a vacuum, themes are generated from concerns of a particular epoch; for romantics like Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, it was the pursuit of the ideal truth, a return to nature that tended towards naturalism and for the ecocritics, it is a call to disassociate from every destructive tendency towards nature, like industrialization, urbanization and cultures that undermine the force of the physical environment. In his *Preface To Lyrical Ballads* (1800), Wordsworth sums up these concerns,

What then does the poet? He considers man and the objects surrounding him as acting and reacting upon each other,...He considers man and nature as

essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and the most interesting part of nature (10).

The argument in the above excerpt reveals the symbiotic nature of the relationship between man and his environment which in turn is the purvey of literature. It also highlights naturalism, a major tenet of the romantic period. The romantics believe in naturalism and reality in the place of morality as would be revealed in the textual analysis subsequently. The realities in the societies are responses orchestrated by the emotional vibes in the society and so here, truth and the concept of morality are judged as relative.

Every imaginative work of art is made up of a plot, setting, point of view, character, and other elements. However, it would not be an over-emphasis to state that the setting decides other elements and is at the core of literary appreciation. This is so because the very essence of humanity is the society. It would be absurd to situate a culture or phenomenon outside its immediate environment, which shapes the issues. According to Oyigbenu (34), 'The historical, social and metaphorical background of any given play unfolds within its setting because the setting helps to bring out the meaning of text. This is more so, that a story must begin and end within a definite historical time frame'. It is thus important to state that literature is peculiar to different regions and societies.

It would not be an over-emphasis to state that, the physical make-up and attitude of characters in any work of fiction is largely influenced by its setting. This is so because the themes in a work of art materialize in the course of the relationship of characters with their physical environment. For instance, the significant Victorian era in literary history, an antecedent of the industrial revolution of the 1920's was instrumental to the shift in the concerns of writers. This ultimately shaped the literary sphere and the birth of the novel genre, as the artistes desire to capture the volume of responses that came with the changing terrain. Similarly, the ensuing global financial crisis that tailed the movement from nature to technological advancement resulted in civil unrest and introduced different situations in the society as people tried to grasp the new order. This also triggered the conviction among writers that literature be targeted towards the new situations created in the society and led to the popular culture of 'art for life sake' as opposed to 'art for art sake'. Writers assumed the role of representing specific social and political issues which steered literature unto new

frontiers. The preoccupation of critiques of the period was with the artiste's ability to situate literature on real issues. W. H Hudson recaps,

The case for Literature with a purpose is obvious, the case against it less...literature is not the mere statement of a problem [...] A vision of truth is the peculiar and special contribution which a great poet or novelist is qualified to give to mankind (291).

Every society has its peculiar needs, which are neither universal nor exclusive to it. Therefore, a writer laden with the consciousness of providing vision for the society s/he represents makes central its topical needs. This issue stems generally from events in the environment. The ability to articulate these events quintessentially marks an artiste's relevance.

From the forgoing, it is important to isolate Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. African literature explores different issues, depending on the prevailing circumstances that appeal to the writers. Its themes also convey ideologies of the specific periods in history as shaped by the experiences that define their political, economic and socio cultural realities. African fiction has, over time recorded a shift from the derivative forms of pre-colonial era, which were succeeded by the assertion of African intellectual prowess in colonial period, to the post colonial concern of providing social vision for the society. What marked the art of the continent and its grouping is the shared experience of colonization, the impact which has shaped the continent. However, although this experience is common to Africa, their peculiarity lay in the different economic and administrative policies of the different colonialists which was crafted with consideration given to distinct environmental features as orchestrated by their physical landscape and mineral deposits which were the attractions in the first place. This was done with the understanding of crafting a suitable means of exploiting different colonies for maximum profit. The idiosyncrasies of African literature derive from these, as different writers isolate specific needs of their regions.

The quest for developing a socially conscious art for the African continent evolved into a pre-occupation with history. Here, truths are arrived at through the process of using the past to explain the present; the origin of crises in societies was predicated on the interrogation of history and its consequences. And in the process, a visionary map is crafted for the progress towards resolution. In Nigeria, the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta and encounters

with oil exploration companies, served as raw material for the writer. Since the economic and political policies were predicated on the encounter with the imperialists that brought about issues like class struggle, poverty and social injustice, writers and critics alike adopt post-colonial approach in their discourses. Giving a post modernist reading to ecocriticism is important in the task of challenging the hierarchical relationship etched in the society. Glen Love notes ‘Nature, unfortunately for organization of academia, is vexingly interdisciplinary’ (228) this is the hallmark of postmodernism. Tiffin, a leading name in post-colonial discourse, suggests that eco critical approach to postcolonial writing should highlight ‘not only an ecologically informed critique of global-capitalist ideologies of development’ but to encapsulate corrective readings of texts in line with the two concepts at play. So, it should adopt a prescriptive and corrective approach since postcolonial discourse tends towards effecting a revolution to the Europeans perception of African society. Here, culture and nature are juxtaposed. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (6) opine,

Postcolonial studies has come to understand environmental issues not only as central to the projects of European conquest and global domination, but also as inherent in the ideologies of imperialism and racism on which those projects historically – and – persistently depend.

This is integral in interrogating the eurocentric perception that Africa was an expanse of untamed wildlife. Similarly, this approach espouses the distortion of pastoral life of African communities and the imposition of western view of the environment which exterminated the traditional restitution rites indulged in by communities observed by them to maintain the co-existence between the people and the other non-human communities.

2.2 Ecocriticism As A Theory

Eco criticism as given by its chief proponents entails the examination of the relationship between human forces and the physical environment. The articulation of this relationship is observed as eco-literature. Just as other ideologies adopt different approaches, ecocriticism takes an approach that centres on Nature. The eco critical outlook articulates the history of a people by putting nature at the centre. Cheryll Glotfelty avers that,

ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical world[...] just as feminist criticism examines language and literature

from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of the mode of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies (xviii).

The examination of the relationship between man and elements in the environment has evolved over time, such that the reversal of roles has given man a predatory position and the environment, a victim. An ecology conscious art agitates for a symbiotic relationship between man and the environment and cautions humanity against its activity to harness the elements of nature that tends towards destruction of the natural habitat. This caution has been amplified over the years beginning with the incursion of industrialization. Sigmund Freud in his *Civilization and Its Discontent* notes,

Thus we recognise that a country has attained a high level of civilization when we find that everything in exploiting the earth for man's benefit and in protecting him against nature is cultivated and effectively protected (53).

This perspective resonates with eco-critics' tenet of environmental preservation. The modification of the eco-system to build man's civilization has gone unchecked and environmentally conscious literature has moved from advocating its preservation to repudiating the distortion of nature while calling for its restoration.

It would be banal to attempt a separation of man, and the environment. The awareness of the relationship between human beings and other elements in the eco-system is expected to foster a symbiotic relationship between them. Ecocriticism brings to the fore issues that ensue in the interaction between nature and environment, and literature. How literature has articulated this and the vision it prospects constitutes the critique of its role as a literary approach to environmentalism. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Environmentalism and its concepts hold, 'Habitat, climate and other ecological factors have an important influence on economy and social organization and on traditional religion'. This thought has been highlighted in many imaginative and critical works. Patrick Murphy agreeing with Jung's concept of Ecopiety which reads, "by ecopiety, we wish to convey a very deep abiding sense of care and reverence for coexistence among all beings and things, whether they be human or not", suggests, 'the aesthetic demands attention to intrinsic value, on one hand, and synchronicity and holism demand that economics take into account the

integrity of the environment and the psychological orientation of humanity, on the other hand' (70). This psychological mood is best captured by Kaine Agary in *Yellow Yellow*, where Zilayefa desperately searches for an escape from Wokiri and 'the depression that engulfed it gradually' (23), following the oil spillage that killed her mother's plants and deferred her final exams. Again, Agary explores the movement of population from a dead environment to a 'viable' one and the attendant disappointment in the quest for a greener pasture. The same idea is aptly summarised by Michael Peel (27) thus: 'It is often hard to convey to outsiders the degree to which the story of oil permeates the psychological warp and weft of Nigerian everyday life'. This is due in part to the clash of interests of stakeholders projected in the controversy that trail the debate about oil with its bias and perspectives stimulated by self interests and regional loyalties.

2.3 Critical Comments on Tanure Ojaide's Works and Empirical Review of Related Literatures on the Niger Delta

Eco-critical debates are polemic in the African context because the continent has been on the receiving end of all forms of injustice and exploitation beginning with the colonial era. As such, environmental advocacy has been structured along this line. The continent's physical landscape has been exploited, the ecology dislocated and its elements mostly neglected owing to the concentration of European activities. In Nigeria, in particular, using the Niger Delta as a case study, the environmental justice-centred approach is adopted to combat the global conspiracy of capitalists in the region. Writers like Tanure Ojaide lament the environmental pollution and resultant effects of oil spills and gas flares that have led to the destruction of the agrarian livelihood of the people of the Niger Delta. The extraction of oil by multi nationals targeted at profit-making is carried out without caution. In the process, it cripples other economic aspects of the region like fishing, farming and hunting. Ojaide's imaginative prowess shaped by his historical affiliation with the region developed into a radical approach as captured by Terhemba Shija below,

...there appears to be an aesthetic co-relationship between the physical destruction of the Delta landscape and decay of social life and the common people, the state murder of Ken SaroWiwa also correlates with the shift from Ojaide's temperate agitation for the rights of the Niger Delta people to a harsh combative mood (197).

In most of his works, especially his poetry, Tanure Ojaide shows his anger with the political system that robbed the region of its right to self-determination. The Federal Military Government in its anti-people policy endorsed and licensed operations of the capitalists in the area with adverse effects on the life of the community. Similarly, Ojaide brings to the fore the forces at work in the region. Ethnicity, racial bigotry and the class-oriented system are identified as the causes of the oppressive situation in the society. Ojaide reflects,

By the 1960's the river had been dredged to allow pontoons or even ships to enter our backyard. Shell BP had started to pollute the rivers, streams and farmland with oil and flaring gas. Forest had been cleared by poachers and others to feed the African Timber and Plywood Company in Sapele(15,Delta Blues).

This translates into ecological imperialism according to him, and explains his vehement protest against the capitalists in policies that undermine the environment of the Niger Delta and in the process compromise the security of the region. Writers like Niyi Osundare, Odia Ofeimun, J. P Clark, Eddie Iroh, and Ahmed Yerima among others in varying degrees, exhibit nuances of the eco-critical consciousness in their works by tracing the relationship between the natural environment and the arising social issues in the contemporary time. Tayo Olafioye confirms this in the following words,

The environmental pendulum of the Delta swings from myth to reality, from poetry to fiction and back from fiction to reality. How consuming is the essence of the Delta? How disturbed and disturbing is the mythical and physical spirit of the enclave today? The savage treatment meted out to people and land loudly attests (15).

This aptly captures the quality of narratives and sources of tales from the Delta. At the same time, it leads to the issue of the intersection between fiction and reality. What separates the two? While critics, time and again, lament the supposed lack of literariness of Ojaide's novel and conclude that he should stick to his rich poetry, the above excerpt perhaps provide justification for Ojaide's inability to sustain the sophistication highlighted in his poetry or be restricted by issues of style, diction or aesthetics. The reality in the region needs no sugar coating. The rapid degeneration of the Delta's environment accounts for the loss of poetic presence and imagery which memory served. The stark description of the devastated

landscape of the Niger Delta as a result of activities such as oil prospecting, exploration, tree felling/logging among other offshore operations accounts for the shift from nostalgic representation of its lush vegetation to the naked representation of the ruin to the Niger Delta in particular and Nigeria in general. This, coupled with his being exiled explains his inability to see the internal contradictions evident in the oil politics in the Niger Delta. As he had earlier given, “To me as a poet, childhood is vital; because it is the repository of memory... (122, Poetic Imagination).

Little wonder therefore, that Michael Peel in *A Swamp Full of Dollars* is able to give a more literary feel in his insider account of the Nigerian reality as evident in his adoption of satire as a subtle tool in conveying his message. While Peel was able to see the irony and the contradictions in the socio-economic and political reality in Nigeria, Ojaide was far removed from these realities and too consumed with the level of decay and impunity of the political milieu of the era to dwell on aesthetics. Although Ojaide’s *The Activist* was written in diaspora, it serves a social function and reflects Ojaide’s desire to be directly involved in the socio-political change he envisages as highlighted in the return of *The Activist*. Perhaps, this would put to rest the concerns of critics like Dul Johnson who argues that,

Ojaide’s stay abroad poses the serious question for the African artiste living abroad but writing about how the revolution would take place in his home country. It poses the questions: how will the poets living outside home help in the march towards a new life if they remain abroad? (220, Writing the Homeland).

The innate desire to contribute to the advancement of the society, most writers and critics alike believe, should be central to the artiste and though constraints of all sorts may limit direct participation of writers in the diaspora, works of art are timeless and those with meaningful messages do evoke significant quality of responses as they deal with socio-political issues and interrogation of different phenomena in the society made possible. Therefore it no longer matters where a writer is or comes from or even writes from, if s/he is able to put his prejudices aside while dealing with injustices in the society. If the writing is able to invoke the envisioned responses, then the task of the writer is successfully carried out. Achebe reiterates this ‘Literature whether handed down by word of mouth or print, gives us a second handle on reality [...] (117). If the reconstruction of reality is at the core of literature

where different ideologies are born in the process of having a grasp of the realities in the society, it follows therefore that it does not matter where you live.

Colonial fiction, which was mostly a reaction against the racial bigotry of European perception of Africa as a reserve of wildlife without human activity and culture as reflected in the writings of David Conrad and Joyce Carey informed the violation of its fertile lands. It was also a distortion of its history and culture and forms the major thrust of African eco critical discourse. This is best grounded by the volume of criticism that followed Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; a condescending account of the African landscape that tends toward providing legitimacy for the motivation of Europe's intrusion. This criticism is reinforced in the writings of African writers whose narratives articulate the history of their society and the culture of the people as inextricably tied to their physical landscape. Niyi Osundare's *Ours to Plough, not to Plunder* best illustrates this interest. The damage done to Africa's material environment is interpreted as the direct effect of the sell out; commercialization of its rights. This is in consonance with David Carrol's views that: 'African writers have employed literature in one of its traditional roles to explore and open up neglected areas of experience by clearing the grounds of prejudice and preconception' (22). In Nigeria, the issue of environmental degradation that has been relegated has been forced to occupy centre stage as necessitated by the reality in contemporary times. Sule E. Egya argues that,

The problems of the environment for contemporary Nigerian poets are entrenched in the larger crisis of leadership confronting Nigeria. The concern with nature is not a shift from the broad base of Nigeria's literary tradition, but rather an extension of that tradition in order to encompass the earth on which the people live (2).

Egya's argument rings true as it links the issue of the environment to the crisis of leadership. However, this argument is deeply grounded in the socialist realist tradition that is minimalistic in its approach on environmental matters. This is so, because the earth has much more symbolic powers than just a stage for humans to live on. Here, writers dwell on the implication of the degradation of the environment on the socio-economic realities of Nigeria. Writers like J.P Clark, Ochia Ofemun, Niyi Osundare on the other hand maximally handle the subject of nature.

In Martin Gray's *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, the realist tradition is captured as an approach adopted by writers 'who show explicit concern to convey an authentic impression of actuality, either in their narrative style, or by their serious approach to the subject matter' (241). This is the hallmark of Niyi Osundare's poetry, where nature, symbolic of the physical environment is a recurrent decimal, especially in his collection; *The Eye of the Earth*. Referring to the realistic representation of the African environment, Jeff Doki explains in relation to the poet's praxis that,

'In his celebration of the theme of nature also Osundare makes the suggestion that the despoliation of the land by certain forces in the society is capable and can actually endanger the full existence of man as a human being (76).

This is deduced from 'nature's responses to the environment' as reflected in the negative and positive outcomes that is tenable when it rains. This thought is vividly captured in Osundare's poem, *Sometimes When it Rains*. The 'It' in the title of the poem can be directly interpreted to refer to nature and we can infer 'Rains' metaphorically stands for responses by nature to its handling by man. This thought is also in line with Doki's thought that there exists 'apparent correspondences between man and his environment'.

Another way of measuring the realist nature of any work is in the element of intertextuality that shows that no text is an island, and texts can be placed side by side to foreground their interconnectedness. Here, the narrative, culture, ideologies and other elements of texts are contrasted to ground authenticity of a text. This, according to proponents of intertextuality is because texts are products of ideological or socio-economic realities of a given epoch. Barthes states that 'every text is a new tissue of past citations' and Terry Eagleton holds that every literary work is essentially 're-written', by indicating that each text directly or indirectly makes reference to other texts. This is so because no writer writes in a vacuum (Ngugi) . The phenomenon is represented in Michael Peel's *A Swamp Full of Dollars* with its significant degree of reference to existing works on the Niger Delta.

Taking this environmental highlight to new frontiers, Michael Peel's title *A Swamp Full Of Dollars* explains the Euro-capitalist perception of Africa's fertile landscape as an untamed wildlife reserve that needed civilization. The issues raised in the text are treated as implications infused by the capitalist handling of the Niger Delta physical environment and

then as highlights of government's policies or lack of them, which breeds a conducive atmosphere for corruption, from which other social vices in the environment spring. Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* shares this outlook and presumption that all social issues in the Niger Delta stem from the injustices done to it by the economic decisions of Government. Chinua Achebe in his *The Trouble with Nigeria* asserts,

The problem with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or land or air or anything else [...] (2).

While Achebe's text is an essay, it can be said that the two writers under study are fictional. In his novel, Ojaide articulates the violence of oil bunkering, kidnapping, and extortion from multi nationals as reprisal acts, responses to the violence perpetrated against the region by the instrument of state that empowered the capitalist system in operation in the society which has rendered the economy prostrate. Karl Maier in *This House Has Fallen* reflects,

Thirty years after Isaac Boro's uprising, Oil pollution, uncontrolled logging, and over fishing spread misery and the feeling of alienation among the Ijaws and neighbouring minority groups. Following Ken SaroWiwa's hanging in November 1995, the baton of resistance passed to radical Ijaw youths, as the history of the Delta came full circle (125).

Particularly true is Maier's assertion that, the history of the Niger Delta had come full cycle. However, on the factor of 'over fishing', it would seem the reality is the influx of a large population to the region. Due to its economic attraction and the situation of reduced aquatic life owing to off shore oil exploration, the Niger Delta is faced with insufficiency of supply to meet the demand of its teeming population. The heightened consciousness of the environmental degradation and the anxiety that attended it turned the Niger Delta into a volatile area infused with crises. Peel adopts the term 'Trigger point' as a warning to the global community on the eruption of violence on a large scale that would engulf the world, if caution were not applied to the situation. Patrick D. Murphy in *Ecocritical Explorations in Literary and Cultural Studies* states,

In *Soylent Green*, population growth coupled with increasing levels of population is causing the death of vegetation and, as finally recognised, the

death of the oceans, the last major source of food. In response, the government tries to cover up not only the information about population and dwindling food supplies... (165).

The assertion by Murphy points to the fact that many of the crises in the Delta are driven by overpopulation and hunger, and so the government through polices ought to take a posture that would tackle these problems head-on. The role of population, especially migration in the face of decline in natural resources should be taken into consideration in National planning. This has necessitated policies on population control and other activities like family planning campaigns in countries like China. These are done with the understanding of the integral place of population in national planning and development. For instance, where the population rests on agriculture for its basic needs, and the food becomes insufficient, famine could result. As if serving the role of a prophet, Murphy, had five years before its tragic occurrence, warned about the possibility of the Ebola outbreak as possible correlation between population and the outbreak of epidemics. Because of clustered settlements in supposed urban centres due to perceived economic viability, there is increased human activity and the risk of poor waste management for instance exposes a large number of people to diseases like Lassa fever. He also forewarned on the negative impact of the sole dependence on oil by the global community.

This constitutes a major element in Nigeria's crisis point and Nigerian fiction mirrors the attendant problems that emanate from total reliance on oil from the Niger Delta, which has led to the exploitation of a minority peasant population to develop the centre. The ensuing defiance that is somewhat endorsed by writers as an alternative hegemony against the class oriented system institutionalized in most societies is typical of responses of the oppressed to the oppressor. Serving the role of an alternate hegemony, Nigerian literature interprets social vices as direct consequences of the dislocation in society and therefore advocates a change. In the case of the Niger Delta, the reappraisal of the Nigerian policy making is projected in the non-inclusion of the host community in the determination of its environmental issues. Ngugi in *Killam* on the motivation for writing his novel *Petals of Blood* notes, 'I believe a people have a right to know how wealth is produced in their country... (96)'. Establishing this fact would no doubt herald debates towards the resolution of the crisis surrounding Resource Control and Derivation policy in allocations which continue to generate heat in Nigeria. Tamuno observes that,

The distressed communities in the Niger Delta would further argue that continued refusal to concede their demands for Resource Control and the like by the relevant Federal authorities in Nigeria and the Multi-National Corporations which aided and abetted them was a clear form of Fiscal Terror (161).

As far as the community is concerned, the refusal to accede to their demands constitutes fiscal terrorism. They believe that the resolution of the derivation formula would solve the problem of unequal distribution of wealth, which forms the major thrust of the emancipation campaign writers have always recommended. A situation Maier refers to as the 'large but unevenly suffused injection of wealth.'(77). This description fits the Nigerian society, as it aptly captures the quality of life led by different classes of people in the society. In Nigeria, the regional principle of derivation and allocation based on population manifests in the impoverishment of the Niger Delta region on a twin level to economically empower other regions who do not directly share in the perennial destruction to environment and lands that rocked the Niger Delta. The revenue sharing formula was not equitable, hence advocacy for its re-appraisal.

2.4 Dialectics of Resistance: Eco-Terrorism

In Nigeria, the fight for emancipation from marginalisation, exploitation and oppression has led to the emergence of separatist groups from different regions whose activities have over time evolved from acts of agitation and advocacy to terrorism. Writers have continually justified every act of man to liberate himself and in the process; the ecology has been at the receiving end of the destruction by the two forces [government and multinationals as well as indigenes of the region] at war in the society. The proverbial fight between two elephants comes to mind, leaving the grass as bearer of the suffering. Here, the grass is a metaphor for the environment under threat of caving from the magnitude of the weight it bears; not just from the multinationals but also the people's insurgency as well.

The understanding that development emerges as a result of interaction between opposing forces in any society is fundamental to its application to literature. In representing the Nigerian reality, writers have isolated two forces at war in the society- the exploiter and

the exploited. Through narratives that capture binary oppositions; the internal contradiction in the society i.e. negative/positive, degeneration/development, good/evil, etc, writers have tried to establish what terror really means. From cultural perspective to social ideologies in their mission to create social vision, writers have regarded these binaries, as forming the basis for development. The thought follows therefore that the interrogation of these elements would unravel the truth; the perceived reality would in turn determine the dialectical position of a writer; an ideological standpoint that highlights his sympathies and aids his desire for justice.

In the Niger Delta, bunkering, vandalism, and kidnapping and extortion of the European multi-nationals feature as reactionary response of the host community to the exploitation by the conglomerates. We say 'host community' because they present the grievances of the region whose people have lost faith in government because of its oppressive military clampdown. David Smock projects, 'a major military offensive could turn even the uncommitted in the Delta into strong opponents of government.'⁽³⁾ Although, Smock's report is on peaceful dialogue, it traces the historical development of militancy in the area, which has been amplified over time by the visible impact of gas flares and spills, and alleged military operations that sometimes wiped out a whole section of the region. This is best highlighted in Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*, where villages are abandoned and on the frontline of a war between the army and militias, and only the cult members who reject money as directed by their leader survive. Others that received payouts from the oil companies are fatally affected. This form of narrative delivers the story of the Niger Delta and the oil politics in the region which gives momentary relief to those who would accept and dare others who refuse to be bought over. Rufus and Zaq's quest soon turns into the perusal of the origin of protest in the area and resort to the kidnap of the wife of the European oil executive. Obafemi Awolowo captures the origin and instrument of revolutionary protest thus,

During the campaigns for independence, they have been taught how to apply the weapon of articulated dissent [...], after independence; they now seek to employ these same weapons to win economic, social and political advantage for themselves. (47-48)

In the Niger Delta, the active population in a bid to combat exploitation by the imperialist and the injustice of the Nigerian administrative structure resort to debased criminal acts to wrest

their resources from the grasp of the government. Writing on the issues of resource control, Ahmed Yerima advocates the inclusion of the host community in policy making as it concerns their lands. Perhaps, this would sponsor the ‘Agrarian Revolution’ Awolowo recommends to prevent looming famine. In a bid to understand the concept of Terror, Tamuno proffers that the psychology of victims and victimisers be investigated. He further states,

...grievances, resentments and resultant anger, from miscellaneous sources, could well fertilize the plant of Terror. In these respects and more, the phenomenology and aetiology of Terror, as applicable locally and globally, could prove quite complex, though quite relevant and significant as in the Niger Delta communities, if not elsewhere (161).

Tamuno is right to trace the roots of violence in the region to government’s neglect. It is apparent that the cycle of violence and counter violence that rocked the Niger Delta emanates from the failure of dialogue and a series of controversies that grow into conflict climaxing in physical confrontation due largely to the poor management of oil politics in Nigeria. While writers have continually endorsed every attempt of man to liberate itself from injustice, the Niger Delta narratives carry in themselves contradictions. One of such is extreme fear infused in the society they claim to be protecting from external despoliation. Inherent in the tools of intimidation, coercion and violence employed by the militants in their emancipation call for the Niger Delta’s landscape is a form of eco-terror. Like a crusader, the militias rob the very land they swear to protect. They expose their communities to all sorts of pollution in their oil bunkering activities that entail vandalism of pipelines and other facilities that release injurious substances into the ecology. Glen A. Love citing his contemporary, Theodore Roszark avers,

We have an economic style whose dynamism is too great, too fast, and too reckless for the ecological systems that must absorb its impact. It makes no difference to those systems if the oil spills, the pesticides, the radioactive wastes, the industrial toxins they must cleanse are socialist or capitalist in origin; the ecological damage is not mitigated in the least if it is perpetrated by a ‘good society’ that shares its wealth fairly and provides the finest welfare programs for its citizens[...] (227, *The Ecocritical Reader*)

From the foregoing excerpt, whether one sets out to victimise the environment or not, the activities of both defenders and offenders is injurious to it. For instance, the activities by oil bunkers towards the determination of their resources, against the capitalists' profit oriented programs are motivated by 'maximum productivity and unbridled assertion of human dominance' (33) as given in *Person Planet* leaves the environment at the receiving end of oppression from both parties.

The Niger Delta region is not the only part of Nigeria that needs to adopt a sensitive attitude to its environment,. the task of raising an environment conscious art rests on writers from all regions. In an attempt to interrogate literary works from the north for instance, Ferdinand I. Asoo takes up Denja Abdullahi's challenge to writers from the region in these questions,

How many northern writers have taken advantage of the enhancement in their environment with the long and rich history associated with it to produce great literature?... are we saying the truth if we assert that the northern writers are not focusing on the environment because they are from relatively unthreatened and well protected environment?(3).

The answer to these questions by Abdullahi is negative. Every region is bedevilled with issues from its environment and although idiosyncrasies on the handling of the matters abound, the bottom-line is the perception of man's role, which he considers superior and its effects on or against the environment. The issues of desert encroachment, global warming etc have given rise to campaigns such as "plant a tree", "green energy conservation", amongst others. It would seem what Abdullahi advocates is in line with precautionary measures rather than emancipation crusades. The writer must infuse a heightened consciousness of the environment in his society, which would influence their handling of environmental issues. The perception of human beings concerning the ecology ought to be corrected and the truth exposed. For instance Asoo presents a reverse account of the nature of this relationship. He opines,

The ecocritical evaluator must watch out for those aspects of the novel which while paying attention to man, tend to view man as an appendage to the environment that supports and maintains him, gives him a culture and above all makes life meaningful to him (57).

This marker interrogates the subtle manifestation of the psychological perception of humans which is etched in the dominance of other non-human species. What should be promoted instead should be a symbiotic co-existence. At this point, it should be recalled that, in the age of Darwin's *Homo sapiens*, nature was perceived as superior but as man tamed the wild and came up with inventions to modify his environment as it suits his curiosity, man's activity evolved and he assumed a predatory position over his environment. It is this predatory nature that ought to be corrected. In contemporary reading of texts, this reverse situation threatens the balance of the universe and writers' engagements often are tailored along historical realities and landmark disasters such as volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc which are often times interpreted as protest of non-human elements. Ecocriticism ties all natural disasters and socio-economic realities to the degradation of the ecology.

From the foregoing, it is pertinent to relate the study to the interrogation of the very concept of modernism. The concept of orientalism that entails movement from tradition to modernism must be demystified and literature can interrogate the place of development in terms of industrialization, scientific inventions and technology that negate the basic needs of food, water and shelter. All of these needs are inextricably tied to the physical environment. In *A Swamp Full of Dollars* and *The Activist*, the upsurge of social vices in Nigeria is directly attributed to poverty. Realist tradition represents the themes of chronic employment, lack of basic infrastructure, poor educational facilities, lack of access to capital flow as a result of low GDP etc as direct consequences of the distortion to the quality of life led before the incursion of 'civilization'. This is in line with the ecological thought that calls for qualitative efforts in the grooming and preservation of the environment so that the devastation brought by 'civilization' could be mitigated.

Having linked the criticism of the literary face of the Niger-Delta to a much broader concern with the side effects of civilization such as oil exploration, underdevelopment and over population, and the inability of the land to yield food for the teeming population, the next chapter examines *The Activist* which is Tanure Ojaide's contribution in the ongoing efforts at unveiling the conflict between oil companies and governments on the one hand and the Niger Delta region on another. This analysis would be carried out using Eco-Criticism as discussed under the subsequent subheading; Theoretical Framework.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Ecocriticism is adopted for the analysis. Ecocriticism as a theory emerged in the United States of America in the 1990s and like other literary theories, it is both prescriptive and propagandist in approach and content. It examines how writers handle the nature of the relationship between man and the physical world. Cheryl Glotfelty, William Slaymaker, William Stroup, Lawrence Buell, are leading critics that handle the subject qualitatively through works that demystify the concepts arising in eco-study and the interrogation of the perception of writers on the subject of nature and its role in human socio economic realities. Glotfelty gives markers of ecocritical readings to feature questions such as,

[...]In what way has literacy itself affected humankind's relationship to the natural world? In what ways and to what effect is the environmental crisis seeping into contemporary literature and popular culture? What bearing might the science of ecology have on literary studies? Do men write about nature differently than women do? How is science itself open to literary analysis? How is nature represented in this [literature]?(2-3)

At a glance, ecocriticism bears a semblance to romanticism but it is much deeper than that, and can be described instead as a reappraisal of the preoccupation of writers with nature. It tends towards the aspects of romanticism that commended simple and natural country life. Where themes that directly affect the human existence are perused and, common and natural aspects of life are elevated, as evident in the poetry of Wordsworth, Keats and Coleridge. Similarly, Romantics looked into the past as an escape from the present realities as inspired by the industrial revolution was not far removed from reality, In the wake of realism, literature assumed a new responsibility as writers shifted focus to the representation of the stark reality necessitated by industrial advancement. This, however, did not push the subject of nature to the background, on the contrary, it opened discussions on the role of literature and man, and it's bearing on the modification of the environment. The school of thought that reflects the problems of contemporary times and traces their origin to the distortion of nature is ecocriticism. It takes a post-modernist approach in the articulation of the subject of nature by relating it to different schools of thought. As a literary tradition, ecocriticism is ever

evolving; it has been related to the fields of Marxism in its dialectical approach and has identified with the objectification feature of Feminism, where the woman is acquired like land or any commodity to boost Man's ego or status in the society. The domination of nature has been connected to the subjugation of women by the men folk. In what is known as eco-feminism, feminist and ecological thoughts come into fusion to dethrone the perception that man dominates woman and owns just like he does once he acquires land. In this regard, the motivation for the acquisition of land is exploitation, just as a woman is commoditised and exploited for man's benefit without thought to her happiness, so is nature raped of its resources and neglected to the point of sterility. Domination of perceived inferior specie, which is the major tenet of patriarchy, comes under attack. Jeremiah Samuel Methuselah captures it thus,

Therefore, parallels are often drawn between society's treatment of the environment, animals, or resources and its treatment of women. In resisting this patriarchal culture, ecofeminist feel that they are also resisting plundering and destroying the earth. (129)

In line with post-modern schools of thought that embrace the fusion of different movements and beliefs that no scholarship is exclusive in itself, writers and critics have continued to advocate for collaboration between relevant ideologies, idiosyncrasies notwithstanding to provide a strong front against institutionalized extreme hierarchies. To decentre these binaries, a multiplicity of movements has generated diverse scholarship with claims on which as the ability to represent nature best. However, amongst these claims, that of the feminists is loudest because, according to them, women interact more with nature and so possess the ability to articulate issues relating to exploitation at different fronts. Ecocriticism aligns with the tenets of other theories that stand in opposition to ideological hierarchies and institutionalized binary concepts that entrench domination and permit extremities, exploitation or oppression.

CHAPTER THREE

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF *THE ACTIVIST*

3.0 Environmental Degradation and Eco critical Responses

This chapter establishes the centrality of ecocriticism in *The Activist*. It exemplifies both the realities of oil politics and its impact on the political, social, economic and physical life of the society; it is therefore suitable material to be employed to measure Nigeria's ecological dissonance and its effect on development. The political violence and the socio-economic paradox in Nigeria are attributed to the ineptitude of the ruling class.

The chapter is divided into the following sections; Synopsis of Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist*, The realist tradition in *The Activist*, Violence as the currency of resistance, Globalization as decoy of imperialism and eco-feminism in *The Activist*.

3.1 Synopsis Of Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist*

The plot is woven around the protagonist of the novel, generally named the Activist who returns to Nigeria after twenty-five years in the Diaspora. Upon return, he is immediately accosted by the socio economic reality of his country-from the hawkers to the area boys and his experience at immigration check in, to his conversation with a taxi driver and a near robbery attack, it dawns on him that the situation he left has deteriorated. He returns to campus and despite his education and status in the society, he alienates himself from the elites-his fellow lecturers, and away from the campus, where he resides, mingles with the 'lowly' instead. As he grapples with the issues that confront him, he bonds with a female lecturer, Ebi. The duo begins a wave of controversy in their ideological standpoints that evoked debates and gossip mostly on Campus. They both explore the Niger Delta and share memories of the Delta before industrial incursion. Through his association with the likes of Omagbemi, Pere and Ebi, the Activist gets a graphic image of his homeland, the Niger Delta; the destroyed landscape and the new social order-politics of oil; ethnic rivalries, lecturers meddling with politics, traditional rulers' betrayal of their people as a result of pay outs, the hypocrisy of the Federal Military Government and its use of force to silence the people's

protest and struggle against deprivation, oppression and social injustice. The Activist soon stirs a wave of activism on Campus and co-pioneers The Delta Cartel. He disregards the Nigerian patriarchal system and moves in with Ebi as a highpoint of their romance. Because of his long stay abroad, he stands against the conventions of grand wedding celebrations and subsequently gets married in a low-key ceremony.

The novel delivers the stories of men like Chief Tobi Ishaka who defy materialism for the general good by fighting for the lost lands of the Niger Delta. It represents the struggles of Pere, Owumi, Omagbemi and others who engage in activities to undermine the oppressive system. The Activist runs for the office of governor and Ebi is at the fore of mobilization of women for the Nude Protest against degradation of the Niger Delta's ecology. Ojaide delivers a social vision in the conduct of elections under no political party and The Activist emerges winner as Governor. As a stock character, the Activist embodies change and carves the path towards change as he embarks on restructuring and innovative projects to settle the conflict in the Niger Delta, thus, bringing politics and the region, at least fictionally to their wholesome state.

3.2 The Realist Tradition in *The Activist*

The plausibility of Ojaide's narrative is evident in the contemporary tune of events and situations evoked in the novel. It embodies the socio historical experience of Nigeria which is engulfed in a myriad of environmental injustice and exploitative political system. Ojaide uses his novel to denounce vices that threaten humanity, and as a weapon against the devastation of his region. Most of the places mentioned are identifiable places and in some cases, he makes use of allusions and colorations to embellish some facts. For instance, the story crafted around General Dagogo in the novel is a reconstruction of the realities in Nigeria that date back to the regime of Late Sani Abacha. In the same vein, the multinationals referred to as Bell Oil Company and O&G Company bear a semblance to the operations of Shell, and Chevron. The setting of the novel- Nigeria - grounds the historicity of *The Activist* as a refraction of truth as given by Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel*. With the volume of events recorded in history, what better genre to chronicle the mass of socio-economic events that shaped it, than the Novel. Ojaide, therefore, captures the dynamism of power relations in Nigeria, using the Niger Delta as a microcosm where oil politics affect the outcome of every part of the region's social and economic life.

To effect change, ideologies and cultural arrangements that encourage the continued exploitation of any region must be challenged. One of such ideologies is globalization whose concept of universality negates peculiar needs of different regions. In the Niger Delta, the devastation of the environment assumes an insignificant position in the agenda of multinationals whose sole motivation lies in maximizing profit driven by the global thirst for oil. Nigerian ecocritical writers therefore make this a centrality in their works targeted at galvanising people's consciousness towards change. Tanure Ojaide is one such writer, whose work is dialectically structured to highlight the centrality of the needs of his region as opposed to global trends,

Contemporary trends are enlarging the African canon. African writers have been responding to the impact of migration and globalization on their people and continent. Environmental and environmental matters, sometimes arising from the actions of multinational companies are at the core of...Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* and *The Tale of the Harmattan* on the environmental degradation of the oil rich Niger Delta area of Nigeria (15).

In tune with Lytord's concept of grand narrative, it decries the universality of intellectuality. The character of 'The Activist' interrogates the level of enlightenment and the quality of leadership delivered by the educated. Ojaide distinctively crafts him to prospect for intellectual participation by creating a vision for the society. He seems the exception in a long list of intellectuals; Prof. Tobore Ede neglects his community in favour of multinationals and Prof. Kokoba disappoints his community through deceit,

When the villagers had protested many years ago about these many pipelines crisscrossing their village, the oil companies... sent the then community development officer, Professor Kokoba, to tell them that they were safe. The villagers doubted they were safe but there was nothing that they could do after their own son whom they had contributed money to send to study law in England, then a professor, assured them that they were safe (154).

This is clearly a situation where those who are supposed to be standard bearers for their society through quality intellectual delivery succumb to bribery and corruption. The corruption is deep seated in the novel, as even the Vice Chancellor of Niger Delta University is a player in the system. The disposition of other lecturers like Prof. Mukoro is that of

nonchalance. These people are guilty of complicity as pointed out by Omagbemi and highlighted in their desire for escape abroad, which sharply contrasts with the views of the Activist as engendered by his experiences abroad (33). The lecturers at the university consider the return of The Activist as absurd as they would not have returned had they been in his shoes. He, in turn, could not comprehend the Diaspora fever. Thus, The Activist serves as a foil to the breed of intellectuals and the quality of leadership they deliver. His ideology lies in active participation to effect change.

Ojaide also articulates the issue of class struggle in the novel. His conception of the possibility of change is anchored in Marxism, a system of socialism whose features include mobilization of the masses in the fight for the public ownership of the means of production. Ojaide through the Activist, represents the determination of the proletariat to rise above their social class and to this end he sees education as the bedrock of infusing a consciousness in the society and goes further to provide the needed alternative voice, to upturn the hegemony of the upper class. He believes in the power of a unified goal by the masses and his thought is consistent with the denunciation of discord, ‘the more divided the people were, the easier it would be for exploiters to realize their goals of high profits’ (150). The Activist, therefore, makes central the task of re-channelling the energies of the lost generation as represented in the ideological restructuring of Omagbemi and his band of cultists on campus. The Activist takes up the role of retraining and mentoring this group while he himself ‘commits class suicide’ by dumping the elite class which he belongs. He does this by presenting that same class as the common enemy. The author, through his characterisation criticises colonialism whose legacy lies in dividing ranks to conquer and infusing a sense of individualism in place of communalism of the pre-colonial, era. During his visit to Aunty Torukpa, he calls for the resuscitation of the oral tradition while decrying the death of *Udje* songs. In consonance with Ojaide’s post colonial preoccupation, his brand of ecocriticism is given a cultural underpinning; he makes reference to ‘Mami Wata and all the gods and goddesses had abandoned their waters and taken away their fortune’ (193). By this means, Ojaide returns virtue to the gods/goddesses who had been abandoned as a result of Christianity. This he directly attributes to the intrusion of private spaces of these extra-terrestrial beings through activities of oil prospecting. He accuses multinationals of ravaging the Niger Delta landscape with complete disregard to the culture and needs of the communities. The idea behind The Activist’s pioneering of *The Patriot* is directly tied to his idea of wresting control from the bourgeoisie, ‘he had his eyes on controlling a segment of the media to influence or affect

public opinion' (229). The base determine the superstructure and so the issue of class relations at play in the novel uses Marxist aesthetics to invoke participation in the political debate targeted at upturning the social order; that is, ensuring an equal society. This task in itself is a difficult one but not impossible to achieve, and so, we see the Activist infiltrate the politics of Nigeria with an air of audacity that thrives despite harassments and violation of human rights perpetuated against the proletariat by the military.

Through intertextuality, a post modern thought that negates the independence of a text and promotes the concept of the death of the author to aid the objective interrogation of any work of art, its view that no text is an island would aid the appreciation of Ojaide's novel and would denounce the tendency to dismiss his work as a bias narrative. He touched on the issue of class struggle, military rule, militarism, and other themes that works of writers like Ahmed Yerima, Odia Ofeimun, J.P. Clark, Eddie Iroh, Niyi Osundare, among others gives credence to. The terror of military rule and its violation of human rights through arbitrary arrests is captured by Ojaide,

Did the Government clear you to travel abroad? The immigration official asked again. Do we need clearance to travel? Chief Ishaka asked, on behalf of the delegates [...] there, Dr.Otite was taken aside as the head of the delegation that was going out to embarrass the Federal Military Government (202-203).

The military becomes a serial violator of human rights by the military becomes serial as it attempts to protect its image in the eyes of international community. The aborted trip reported above is followed up by a series of operations by infiltrating homes of civilians and the premises of *The Patriot* to confiscate pictures and documents that could implicate the military regime for its insensitivity to the rights of the people to the basic necessities of life. The federal secret agents see these raids as a part of their national duty, "did these people know that this could compromise the security of the country?" The agents asked" (205). The question posed conveys a dramatic irony of an epoch in history, where the instrument of state was used to intimidate the people in the name of security. The brutal era of military rule in most African countries with its history of human rights violation constitutes a source of concern to the writer, whose task dwelled in representing the society and taking sides with it against the oppressors, if necessary.

3.3 Violence as the Currency of Resistance

The violence in the Niger Delta is in two folds; Militants, the military as machinery of government with their cohorts who engage in unwholesome activities to maximize profits constitute a faction, and the other is the organised protest by the host community to attract attention to their socio-economic and environmental plight. The second breed has been politically exploited by capitalists and their partners to shift focus from the bigger picture of environmental degradation, whereas the militants has bloomed due to efforts by cabals to benefit from the industry. However, in tune with one of the objectives of the study, it must be re-echoed that, the threat or destruction of the environment by either state, groups or individuals in order to coerce government or civilians does not legitimize the violence on the environment neither does sabotaging the activities of installations that engage in procedures that are perceived harmful to the environment. However, in tune with Ojaide's call in *The Activist* that, 'one must be on the side of humanity, it was cowardly to choose not to take side' (173), the elements of violence, their motivation and instruments would be analysed while bearing in mind, that man is not the only element in the universe.

For the purpose of this study, Fanon's view on violence would be analysed in contemporary context to aid the understanding of the ensuing debates on the Niger Delta. The kind of resistance obtained in the Niger Delta bears semblance to the cry against the exploitation in colonial times. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon advocates for violence to upturn the oppressive social order. Although birthed during colonialism, the motivation was for sovereign state control of the resources in their territory. While the situation in the Niger Delta is similar, it is dynamic in its regional outlook as opposed to the nationalistic goal that was the sole drive of that colonial era. In the Niger Delta, mobilization of the people to put up a single front against the common exploiter is overtaken by the discord introduced by the different class relations in operation in the region. There has been a conspiracy of government officials, local chiefs and highly placed academics, who team up to take advantage of this violence. This ultimately shifts focus from the core issues of environmental pollution and socio-economic injustice that could unite the people in the Niger Delta. As inter-ethnic rivalry flourishes, the physical landscape rapidly depletes. In the novel, while the Izon cry foul of marginalization, the Itsekiri and Urhobos fight for dominance, '...the three groups used their separate languages and history to claim what they had jointly owned or shared in peace'' (212). This is in line with the imperialists' strategy of dividing the ranks in

order to conquer. For instance, the local chiefs elected to present the grievances of the people and serve as middle-men in the negotiation between the community and oil companies, are caught up in the perversion of acquisition of wealth through corruption and although Chief Ishaka stands out in the council of chiefs, his individual protest is of little effect. Also, academic dons like Prof. Ede Tobore and other elites in the society disowns the people's struggle. In the incident of the blow-out at Roko village, the narration captures the response of the oil company thus, "they knew that there was a blowout and the fire vehicles were stationed at a location less than twenty miles away. Rather, they sat in their offices and issued a statement that the native population was sabotaging their pipeline". (155)

Although the task of the Liaison officer consists of investigating the incident and mediating between the two parties to provide an amicable settlement of the conflict between the village and the oil company, Prof. Ede decides to side with the capitalists. He argues that "My company did its best, but the fire overwhelmed everybody" (179) and his replacement Colonel Dudu asks "Do you want my company to build you a new village? (184)". While the former is mobbed by enraged students, the latter meets retributive justice delivered on traitors. The emphasis is on the use of the possessive pronoun 'my', which shows their affiliation and endorsement of the posture of the oil companies. They are supposed to be intermediaries between their community and the oil companies, but they choose instead to side with the perpetrators of exploitation on the Niger Delta because of personal interests.

This is the trend in oil politics, where the appropriation of resources and its control by the oil companies gives the latter absolute power over the area to the detriment of the host community exposed which is exposed to the many hazards of oil exploitation such as gas flares, blow-outs, oil spill, etc.,. Such blatant abandonment in turn infuriates the communities and provides justification for the irate reaction by the youths and the violent attack on oil installations through the activities of bunkerers and other saboteurs. No sooner had Prof. Ede been buried than lobbying for the juicy position of community liaison officer begins. This is so because of the benefits and luxury that came with the office, which account for 'the large but unevenly suffused amount of wealth', that Maier referred to that constituted the crisis in the society.

As Corruption at different levels amplifies, conflict is imminent and threatens to erupt into violence at the least provocation. It is this atmosphere that The Activist returns to, an atmosphere infused with disillusionment and rebellion; an environment set for revolution. He

taps into this situation to carve a path towards a unified goal by channelling the energies of restless youths like Omagbemi towards upturning the existing social order rather than engage in mindless rebellion through activities of cultism. The disenchantment of the youths with the socio-economic conditions of their region accounts for the violence there. Ojaide recounts,

The poor economic situation promoted armed robbery. The area boys were not mindless robbers but hardened locals who felt they had to share in whatever they could from the economic life of their communities. They were jobless urchins capable of robbing, killing, and doing any type of dastardly act for pay to survive the hard times (48).

As is the usual practice of Marxist writings, such as Ousmane's *Gods Bits of Wood*, Aminata Sow Fall's *The Beggars Strike*, Ojaide paints the picture of the area boys as survivors. He tells the story of the area boys and their transformation, and seems to align with Fanon's concept in the *Wretched Of The Earth* where 'The pimps, hooligans, the unemployed and criminals belonging to neither town nor country, the lumpend proletariats are rootless, they are yet to find their bearings in the city...' Fanon believes the power for revolution lies in the passion of this group who desire change. Just as the Ousmanes who trace the activities of leaders as the cause of the downtrodden lives of these peasants, the writer must represent this group with the understanding that they are the result of the oppressive system in their society. Little wonder therefore that Ojaide adds,

Their morality and ethics were convoluted by the socio economic dictates of the time, but they were well the experience of survival, call it hustling, harassment or extortion, they were ready to take on the outsider to eke out a living (50).

Ojaide believes in the role of the area boys and the immense power they possess if only the negative energies are channelled for a god cause.. His foreboding statement, 'the wretched of the earth are usually undermined' (45) is consistent with Fanon's view that they were the repository of power and that revolution was anchored on them. The author's narrative is in consonance with Socialist Realism, which violates the pessimistic naturalists' view and offers instead the possibility of change through ideology and re-orientation. Ojaide anchors his work on Marxist ideology to carve a visionary path towards the progressive transformation of his society. Through *The Activist's* newspaper, the protagonist provides alternative

hegemony for his society and delivers the almost objective version of the plight of the region, through images and stories which the capitalists and government fight with great effort so as to maintain their image in international eyes. First, he uses the outfit to mobilize the region as, “it gave space to folklore of the people, and that made them to know about what united them rather than what divided them that outsiders harped on” (269). And secondly delivered the true stories of the Niger Delta through images,

It showed in coloured and Black and White photographs, the damage done to the environment. The only frogs seen were deformed- one eyed or one legged. Blind turtles were caught on land. Deformed babies were not left out of the pictures (270).

The narration which the Activist represents served its purpose and despite repressive measures by the Federal Military Government, the newspaper outfit succeeds in quantum feats by evoking positive responses from international environmentally conscious organisations. The war against environmental devastation was pioneered and for its close monitoring of the eco-system, *The Patriot* won a prize for Green Peace Reportage. Although The Activist’s intention was to help his people confront their tormentors by ‘creating a base to work for the change he sought’; that he won an award was a bonus.

The Activist recognises the potentials of youths like Omagbemi which he harnesses towards positive action. In his opinion, ‘Reorient their energies against the common goal’ (174). The motivation of The Activist is simple, ‘he wanted to rob the oil companies and the federal Military Government to spite them for their indifference to the suffering of the Niger Delta people’ (267). To wrest power from these conspirators, the source of their power; the flow of funds from oil must be sabotaged. This explains his involvement in oil bunkering through his coalition with the likes of Pere Ighogboja. His alliance with the lowly in the society is informed by his interpretation of their current situation as psychological responses to the crisis in the society. The story woven around Pere, for instance, presents him as a victim of the Nigerian Civil War, which led to the breakdown of the family structure.

Perhaps, the kind of violence Tanure Ojaide recommends in *The Activist* was necessitated by the changing phase of oil politics that degenerated into corruption with impunity resulting in perennial poverty in the Niger Delta. This thought is consistent with Tamuno's observation,

That degree of globalization of the oil war in the Niger Delta raised the stakes of failure or success much higher than those of the Boro and SaroWiwa eras...the strategies and tactics which either side deployed in the oil war and its defence had to be dynamic(82).

Here, the evaluation and conceptualization of terror is relative which is probably due to Ojaide's bias. The major determinant of methods to be adopted is the viability of achieving maximum results for either party. Tamuno concludes that at the level of relevant interpretation, significant set of interests operational in the Niger Delta have to be considered. Tanure Ojaide presents this clash of interests between 'globalism, macro-nationalism and micro-nationalism' in *The Activist*.

3.4 Globalization as Decoy of Imperialism

The international hypocrisy on the devastation of humanity and the environment in the Niger Delta can be interpreted as the capitalists' imperialist posture to continue to run their civilization on the proceeds garnered from racially perceived inferior regions. The propaganda in the media to redeem the image of the oil multinationals opposed the contrary stories that filtered into Europe which should have spurred investigations, but they did not. This is so because the global community were privy to the details of the injurious impact of oil exploration in the region but chose to remain silent in order to maintain their hold on the region.

Although rhetorics on the encouragement of involvement of the indigenous communities made headlines, Chief Ishaka in his 'Native Intelligence' noted that inconsequential menial positions were given to the native population and the mainstream activities surrounding exploration remained closed to them and were the preserve of expatriates. In the novel, Chef Ishaka sends his son to read petro-chemical engineering, to break the jinx and aid his induction into the secrets of mainstream exploration in order to map out suitable emancipation strategies to redeem the Niger Delta,

He supported his son to study petroleum engineering with a vision that he would empathize with his land and preserve the land, the water, and air through professional alternatives to those obtained from foreign explorers who ruthlessly savage the land. After all he has nothing to loose (162).

As a known activist for his homeland, Ishaka presents his arguments to his fellow chiefs at council, 'I have not travelled to Dubai, or Saudi Arabia, but others with oil look far nicer than we do. We even looked better in days before this abundance of oil'. He reads in between the hypocrisy of the Europeans and observes that civilization in harnessing technological advancements to foster human activity does not consist in the devastation of one's means of livelihood,

To him, development meant using modern tools to farm, fish, more efficiently for a good harvest and catch respectively. Development meant modern ways of storing and preserving excess yams and fish for a season of need...it does not constitute rendering a once reliant people dependent on peanuts crumbs and left over (126).

From the foregoing, it is evident that Chief Ishaka as the author's alter-ego. His views are consistent with Ojaide's voice against the violation of the ideal life of the community prior to oil exploration. This raised consciousness is in consonance with the vision Ojaide offers in education through the character of Tobi Ishaka. 'He saw education as a lasting solution'. Education in this sense would mean infusing a heightened consciousness in the society as opposed to western education. University dons fail as does Dennis Ishaka but the vision of The Activist thrives with inputs from 'uneducated' people like Pere.

Although, 'Ishaka's Bell Oil son' fails to make impact, Ojaide succeeds in using him as a statement against global oil politics. Despite his educational background, Dennis Ishaka is employed by Bell Oil but confined to a desk office and used as a pawn to boost the rhetorics of globalization. The narration delivers that the oil boss, Mr. Van Hoort saw 'globalization as involving multi-cultural personnel', if we may add, as long as the racially inferior have an insignificant percentage that can be played up by the media. Dennis was subsequently inducted as resident in Ugunnu, '...to share in all the privileges and benefits of the company, but not in its technical expertise and experience. Allowing him to acquire technical drilling experiences would be suicidal for the expatriate staff and business' (275). He is subsequently transferred to the company's headquarters in Amsterdam despite entreaties from his colleagues to represent their interest, '...we know that the local decisions of Bell Oil company are really taken in Amsterdam'. He is given a ceremonial office and his docility leads to his entrapment with Erika, a metaphor for the debasing perception of

Europeans of African names and tribe. Ojaide also uses the duo's excursion to the Netherlands to expose the ecological paradox,

Dennis was surprised at the pristine beauty of the waters compared to what happened to the creeks, streams, and rivers of the Niger Delta. Dutch forests were still fresh despite the centuries the trees had grown, unlike the dying forests of his native Niger Delta (293).

This paradox calls forth questions like, if the consciousness of the environment was nil at that period, what then was the motivation for the preservation of her forests. This also points to the lack of social vision of the Nigerian government which either does nothing in the area to reserve land or promulgated any preservation laws. Moreover, it does nothing as the Niger Delta ecology is being deliberately destroyed.

Also, the issue of urbanization is at the receiving end of Ojaide's anger as it accounts for the reckless rape of the Niger Delta. Faulting the revenue formula of the Federal Military Government, which ship off wealth from the region to develop the ironically so called 'commercial centres', he calls for a redress. Globalization which consists of building synergy towards common economic and social goals neglects the specific needs of Nigeria. At a time when it should focus on capacity building of the economy, it engages in building paraphernalia to meet up with other regions in the world; in Ojaide's words, 'to build a festive town'. Little wonder therefore that the need of the host community is relegated to the background and their agitations treated as inconsequential. The narrative of neglect persists. Readers are told,

Tobi Ishaka had rejoiced when oil was first discovered in his farmland and family farm land, he expected a transition of the rural place to a city [...] but that joy was short lived as he saw the national profits from oil taken away; first to develop Lagos already developed and then Abuja, the new capital. He saw outsiders occupying all key positions in the oil companies, while most of their children remained unemployed (119)

It must be recalled that, the death of vegetation and aquatic life has rendered the economic preoccupation of the people dead and so, the youths have become unemployed, not necessarily because they were lazy, while the old became mostly dependent on their children who live in the urban areas. This pressure on the youths robbed them of the fun of going

home and returning with gifts gotten from farm proceeds. This, according to Ojaide is because, 'Many oil wells dotted their farmlands now abandoned because they have become a part of a security zone, fenced oil installations, or wasteland' (240). This is the story of Ekakpamre, a microcosm of the Niger Delta region in Nigeria. This situation is legitimized by the military decree of 1975, which gave control of lands to the federal government. The era of military regime in Africa was mostly criticised by the western world except where their economic relationship was under threat. In Nigeria, the oil export was too great for suspension of business relations to be considered. In this regard, the stake of duplicity of the whites is so great that Ojaide dares to insinuate, "This was why they preferred governments run by strongmen in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to democracies whose presidents were never in full control of the affairs of their nation (239)".

The European community's economic interests explains their 'theatrical show of impotence', in their lack of 'interference' on the excesses of the Nigerian Military Government and the accommodation in their banks of money stashed in bogus accounts abroad. The narration corroborates the reality that 'they knew the president was stashing a great percentage of his nation's earning in banks abroad but that was Nigeria's problem and not theirs'. Similarly, their co-operation on recovery of money from banks in their territory can be interpreted as a hypocritical attempt to maintain a cordial relationship with controllers of resources of the reservoir. In *The Activist*, Ojaide sees globalization as a conspiracy of the imperialists predicated on the hypocrisy to maintain the exploitation of other regions. This new phase of capitalism, he, like many writers believe ought to be fought and replaced by visionary leadership enthroned through marxism that would craft a path towards progressive development.

Ojaide provides a social vision. He prospects for a 'No Party' electoral process, "In an unexpected declaration from the electoral commission, no parties to be formed for the promised election[...]each candidate was to run on his or her own recognition (313-314)". This perhaps is to rid the community of high-risk party politics. However, the bottom-line is that the change introduced into the existing order does birth a revolution and we see *The Activist* emerge as governor under no political party. The possibility of change is sustained through *The Activist's* programmes which matched rhetoric with action, "He structured the government ministries and agencies in place before his elections...he created a ministry of Environmental and mineral matters to deal with the problems of the Niger Delta" (318).

The new government evidently holds issues of the environment dear to its heart. Thus, environmental consciousness is sustained through the novel. The use of the Fish as his emblem during campaign would have lost its symbolism, had he not raised the tempo of environmental matters and re-educated his people on the need for collective effort in changing their situation. He calls home, sons from the Diaspora to contribute meaningfully to the development of the region. He asserts,

It was not enough for men to sew their dress shirts in Victorian style and Izon, Itshekiri, or Urhobo. Nor was it enough for the women to wear a three piece dress of head-tie, blouse, and wrapper, none of which was homemade, and call it theirs (321).

Ojaide stands opposed to the social order and uses the carefully selected diction of *The Activist* to lambast the impudence of the ruling class. He advocates for a cut in the cost of governance, as portrayed in *The Activist's* scrapping of his delegation details. The excesses and the flamboyance of these entourages have been noted time and again. And his distaste of capitalism is sustained throughout the novel; he indicts imperialists, who under the guise of globalization perpetuate the exploitation of these regions. Readers are not in doubt where his sympathies are, as he makes allusion to Shylock feasting on the Wretched of the Earth (16) in his description of the oil politics ravaging the Niger Delta. He also refers to the 'chauvinism of the oil boss' as a mistake and as governor, while abroad, "He told Ebi that he wanted to go and carry placards against the evil angels, his new name for the capitalist institutions that did so much damage to economies in the name of assistance (322-323)".

The above reaction is tandem with that of most critics of globalization who see the financial aids, grants, and intervention programmes of world economic powers as entrapments of the 'beneficiaries', as part of the conspiracy of the capitalists to remain relevant and sustain their exploitation and oppression by acquiring the loyalty of the margins to their 'benefactors'. This is highlighted in 'developmental' programmes of the oil companies that are inconsequential compared to the damage done to the environment.

3.5 Ecofeminism in *The Activist*

The degradation of the Niger Delta environment and the ensuing clash between government and militants have great impact on the other members of the society, especially women who bear the brunt of loss of farmlands, children and husbands to the struggle. Women are

exposed to violence in multiple folds; the loss of their means of livelihood leaves them with the option of prostitution to survive deprivations. The women are also physically and emotionally affected by the release of injurious substances into the air or water through spills and constant flare of gas. These activities in turn force them to combat psychological trauma as a reaction to the negative changes in their physiological make up.

In *The Activist*, violence against women manifest at different levels, ranging from cultural to structural. The violence is generated from responses from both the community and government. In all, the tussle for assertion, no perspective takes into consideration the effect of oil exploration on the general wellbeing of women. In the novel, women as custodians of culture both at the home front and society generally awaken to the disunity that threatens the region's existence. The men who are consumed by materialism are engulfed in inter-ethnic rivalries like that stirred by the Federal Military government's 'donation of imported fishing nets to riverine communities'(183), that sparked the mayhem in Warri, which led the region to the brink of defeat in the war on environmental degradation that ravages the entire region. The women through synergy decided to fight the common cause for the sustainability of their region to avoid the threat of extermination of its people. The death of fishing and farm lives was building up to the extinction of its people through loss of their means of livelihood. The women having risen above ethnic differences decided to stop this ecological genocide through drastic actions. In the novel, Mrs Timi Taylor commences reconciliation dialogue strictly for women as a follow up to the crisis and Ebi is one of the representatives from her area. In the course of the meeting, the devastation of the environment is shown to have adverse effects on women as Umotor observed,

...there is not much to show for the hard work because of our soil and rivers... we have been before now been divided into wives and daughters in our separate villages and towns, but this is the first time we are meeting as women...i don't know what is happening elsewhere, but in the Oginibo area the women are finding it difficult to conceive (190).

The effect on the environment on the reproductive role of woman is perhaps the most significant as perceived by the African patriarchal society, and secures the place of the woman in the home and society. Little wonder, therefore, that women guard their procreation abilities through close monitoring, the problem is identified universally to have its origin in the pollution due to oil exploration. Titi from Gbaregolor affirms this perspective and adds,

“...there is much more happening to us women in recent years. Our pregnant women are delivering so many deformed babies. What used to be a rarity is now common place”. The women in unison lament the woes brought upon their society. The women’s position is in tune with contemporary feminists’ thought, albeit womanism that fuses the concern of all genders into its tasks, Matije clarifies its concerns to include,

What affects our men also affect us women...your husband may look well, but many of our men are sick. Newly married women complain openly about the weakness of their men, we older women see what is happening. To be blunt about it, our husbands are losing their manhood at a very early age. How can old men be stronger than younger men? (191).

The changes highlighted above eat into the fabric of family life and although the men are busy with trying to grapple with the reality of the revenue allocation system that deprives them of the power to rein their dominance, the women are not mindless of the adverse effect of the activities of oil exploration and its accumulative impact on domestic life. This new reality is pinned to the four decades of the activities of oil companies in the region and is not limited to women in their productive years alone as observed by Mrs. Taylor,

Our mothers did not complain of any burning inside their bodies...it is as if a fire is blazing inside me. I have heard others complain of the same burning that our educated sisters call hot flashes. Where did those flushes hide before oil came into our lives? Imagine me roasting in the hamarttan cold! The discomfort of being a woman has definitely increased with the discovery of oil in our backyard (191).

In the novel, rather than dwell in self-pity or engage in mere rhetoric on the need for change, these women are determined to orchestrate change themselves against cultural and state constructs that tend to undermine them. They were determined to make a breakthrough in dialogue with the Federal Military Government bearing the pros and cons in mind,

They knew that would be a difficult task because the soldiers in government did not respect women. They saw women as only sex mates and would be pushed hard for a meaningful discussion, but they would do their possible best...they would start with persuasions but if that failed, they would have to

confront those ruining them and their environment with the power they possess (194).

The intersection between Marxism and Feminism is strongly indicated here in the raised consciousness of these women that they could effect change through mobilized action against the FMG and BO. Although their efforts to reach the brokers of power failed and the Nude Protest was truncated by the coalition of Bell Oil and military's conspiracy, a point is scored for this breed of feminists,

The news of Mr. Van Hoort's heart attack and death a week later would not have had much significance on its own...Exactly two weeks after the aborted nude protest, the death of the head of the FMG, General Mustapha Ali Dongo, in weird circumstances, meant the women's stripping protest that was thought aborted had worked....the two tyrants that tormented the Niger Delta people were gone! (217).

The chauvinism of the oil boss who had earlier dismissed the threat of a nude protest by the women as barbaric and later conspired with the federal military government to take physical measures to stop the women was momentary victory for the capitalists. The release of destabilising tear gas that left them unconscious and vulnerable to be raped by soldiers who were ordered to convey them to Warri has his finger prints, which also foregrounds the level of violence against women in the Niger Delta. Therefore Van Hoort's heart attack is deemed as poetic justice duly served. For his role in overseeing a corrupt military that harasses women sexually and physically, the head of state dies mysteriously. These two incidents buttress the points of eco-feminists that they share a closer affinity with the physical environment and therefore possess the passion that is required in ensuring its preservation and restoration. More so, as women's reproductive role gives them the motherly characteristics to nurture this is in consonance with nature which gives them a close affinity to the eco-system.

Whereas the third chapter has examined the role of the writer in providing a vision of society and even leading the way to the emergence of change as demonstrated by Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist*, the fourth chapter will study Michael Peel's *A Swamp Full of Dollars* to situate the author's vision of the Niger Delta

CHAPTER FOUR

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF *A SWAMP FULL OF DOLLARS*

4.0 Preamble

This Chapter analyses the above titled text by Michael Peel. Because it is non-fiction, to ground the authenticity of its narrative, the text would be interrogated alongside its relationship with some works of fiction. Situating elements in the text with other fiction would justify the realities captured in *A Swamp Full of Dollars* and hence aid interpretation of Peel's style of chronicling history. The chapter has the following sub-titles: Synopsis of *A Swamp Full of Dollars*, the impacts of global oil politics on the Niger Delta, Dialectics of environmentalism in the Niger Delta and rhetoric of development in *A Swamp Full of Dollars*.

4.1 Synopsis of *A Swamp Full of Dollars*

The book is a social commentary divided under different headings to accommodate the thematic thrust of each chapter. It treats the significant position of Nigeria in Africa and the strategic impact of the violence that threatens to erupt in its Niger Delta. Peel isolates those issues that have shaped Nigeria and provides source material for writers. His interaction with Asari Dokubo, 'War Lord of the Niger Delta militants,' exposes the contradictions, and ambivalences of the struggle. His interview with Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, Biafra's secessionist leader, traces the motivation for the intent to break away to international politics surrounding petroleum. 'The Boys from the Bookshop' interrogates the emergence of area boys, linking their outcome to the organised corruption that ravages Nigeria to its core.

Referring to the cabals that govern Nigeria as 'Discerning Gentlemen', using Diepriye Alamieyesigha as a representative, Peel examines the hypocrisy of the ruling class' maxim that claims to be securing the future for youths. Peel also takes us on an excursion, 'fish but not fishing' on the Dallas to introduce us to the core of European psychology which is embedded embedded in hypocrisy and conspiracy to maintain its hold on Africa. With the coming of democracy, the illusion is that 'things are looking up', but Peel, through stark facts and figures, presents the wide margin between the cost of government and social welfare. The squandermania of civilians that replaced the ousted military regime reveals the lack of social vision of politicians. This new breed of politicians compared to the post independence leaders

who indulged in building paraphernalia, took corruption to another level. Peel ties the contemporary problems of Nigeria to its policies that tend to empower the capitalists to the detriment of other sections of the population.

4.1 The Realist Tradition in *A Swamp Full Of Dollars*

4.1.1 The Concept of Truth in *A Swamp Full of Dollars*

There is a thin line between fiction and reality, news reportage and prose narratives, both professions share affinity as they deal with objective facts and material reality and the shared element of truth. And although Michael Peel is a journalist, he succeeds as a writer by delivering a narrative that is infused with elements of stark truth, where fiction thrives on fallacy or coloration of reality to task imaginative mind, the reality in the media is supposed to be sacrosanct. Though one is not unmindful of the fact that shows are selected to reflect the writer's bias, Peel is politically and socially committed in his account and therefore delivers a social commentary infused with maps of social direction. Themes of poverty, unemployment, individual and corporate sycophancy, bribery and corruption, embezzlement of public funds, electoral malpractices like rigging, kidnapping, oil bunkering, environmental degradation and global politics of oil run through his writing. He mirrors the sweeping disillusionment that pervades all sectors of Nigerian life in a failed state run by visionless leaders.

The violation of the basic rights of the people through four decades of military regime is not left out as he mirrors the deprivation that was characteristic of the era of tyranny. He interrogates the effect of urbanization that left many stranded on the streets of Lagos and the cycle of bribery and extortion that it breeds. One signpost of its realistic credentials is the use of real life persons evident in the use of their known names,

for Nigerians suffocating in this ever-tightening embrace, a moment of merciful release finally came with the general's sudden death on 8 June 1998[...] Nigerians' reactions to Abacha's death revealed the bleak places to which the regime and its predecessors had taken the country. 'it was perhaps the first time that I remember being glad that someone had died,' recalls a Nigerian...(115).

This is aimed at laying bare the first-hand account of some key players in the events that shaped the history of Nigeria. And so, weaving different plots from different sources from

years of interaction with the society into a single book, Peel makes connections and traces the recurrent pattern of insurgency in Nigeria into a story of how oil politics permeates every sector of the Nigerian society. The violation of the environmental and the socioeconomic welfare of groups which constitute the 'Wretched of the Earth' is at the fore. Peel, in line with the realist tradition, isolates this neglected section of the population to tell their story to the world and with the mix of journalism and literariness, he creates a balance by bringing the perspectives of the cabals in the oil industry, all in a bid to provide balanced narration and account of the warped psychology of the capitalists and their lack of commitment to the cause of humanity. In the text, Basil Omiyi brings to mind what Dennis Ishaka would have developed into, had he not been recalled home by *The Activist* to serve his homeland.

Peel violates the element of basic journalism that promotes objectivity and discourages passing judgements in information dissemination. He engages instead in third degree journalism and in his interrogation passes judgement on the capitalists, thereby taking sides with the masses in the society. Rising above the European culture of bigotry, he comes down strongly on imperialism entrenched both in hypocrisy and conspiracy of the West whose civilization is largely dependent on the oil from the Niger Delta. He bemoans their shirking responsibility to the devastation of the environment and the corruption that it fuels in Nigeria. Peel makes subtle projections of woes that may engulf all continents; (This calls to heart the Igbo proverb, when oil soils one finger, it spreads to others), except drastic measures are taken to avert the wave of insurgency that was on a continuous rise. He proffers solutions in the restoration of the Niger Delta environment and resolution of the discrepancies in the revenue allocation system in Nigeria. He makes authoritative statements at times and at other times, he just lays bare facts and figures and lets his readers make judgement for themselves.

In this book, the realist tradition has upgraded from the mere depiction of realities to proffering solutions. And so Peel provides a vision for society through hints on the possibility of change. He is optimistic that the masses can wrest power from the capitalists and entrench a social order instead to cater for the needs of all members of the society. Through intertextuality, we identify similar patterns of disillusionment in other works, which corroborate the verisimilitude of his narrative. Nigerian writers, especially postcolonial writers have used literature to refract the socio-economic realities truthfully and it is these that Peel chronicles. Therefore, the relationship between art and truth cannot be treated

lightly as it thrives in the realist tradition that deals with the reconstruction of lived experiences and exposes other worlds of possibilities to its readers.

4.1.2 The Impacts Global Oil Politics on the Niger Delta

Peel deconstructs the social and economic institutions upon which Western civilization is premised, and bemoans the fact that they are not interested in the impact of capitalism on the margins. He therefore sees even their intervention programmes with suspicion. He isolates the Biafran rebellion as a case study amongst several and concludes that Britain defined the turn out of the Civil War, because, 'its biggest preoccupation was protecting its stake in Nigeria's oil' and its meddling accounted for the defeat of rebel forces.

No one knew how many people died in the civil war,...the casualties dwarfed those in the Blair-era Sierra Leonean civil war, during which Britain- in contrast to its behaviour in Nigeria- deployed troops to help stop the fighting. The majority of deaths were on the Biafran side... the rebellion was crushed, allowing the business of drilling the Delta's Oil to resume (50).

Obviously, the access of the Federal troops to more sophisticated arms and ammunitions was facilitated by international powers. Their non- committal posture in the civil war Sierra Leon is solely predicated on its inconsequential impact on global business outcome. However, the responses of the international powers during Nigeria's civil war were decisive. Peel does not highlight this in allegiance to the Biafran cause, which was targeted towards the split of the entity, Nigeria, but to uncover the hypocrisy of the West when it came to the welfare of Nigeria, following this line of thought. The aloof posture of both America and Britain in the torrent of insurgency that continues to ravage the north eastern part of Nigeria in recent times consolidates this view. Imperialist capitalism at its height is only out to protect its interests and this is revealed by the Memos uncovered from Britain's national archives on its correspondence between Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Shell BP, where the former stated, ' to help Shell BP and the federal Nigerian authorities to establish effective protection of our oil investments'(52). This further corroborates Maier's theory that the motivation for amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates was for ease of administration through free access to the proceeds of oil to fund the north whose funds was drying up drastically. The point we are making is, the West's concern lies not in the social or

environmental welfare of the Nigerian state but rather, in its economic stakes. This takes us to the thought of Deep Ecology, that it rests on the Nigerian government to craft preservative policies to minimize the effect of oil exploration, and also to provide an equitable revenue sharing formula that would put to rest the issues of injustice and marginalization of sections of the federation permanently. For until Nigeria runs a proper Federation, so will there be issues with nation.

Similarly, Peel attributes the issue of corruption to the perversion of oil proceeds, which account for the marginal distribution of wealth in Nigeria by highlighting the hypocrisy of the West in their accommodative system. He is non-committal in his presentation of the facts and figures surrounding Diepriye Alamiyesigha's London bail skip saga, leaving his readers to reach their own interpretation. While the penthouse deal gone bad was estimated at £1.8 and his bail was set at £1.3, all of which we dare to interpret as international extortion. On late Gen. Abacha's massively recovered stolen public fund from foreign banks, Peel makes this conjecture, "The role of international banks in facilitating these kinds of transactions has become something of a cause celebre, showing how the venality of the western financial system has helped sustain dictatorship in and around the world." This conclusion feeds into Peel's argument that the seeming benevolence of westerners is a facade that gives way when their interests collide with those of others.

The point is borne out of the hypocrisy surrounding oil politics and the cyclic flow of wealth distribution is aided by these institutions which sustain the monopoly and ensure the concentration of wealth within the bourgeois class. He warns that this practice should not be treated mildly. For the most parts, it constitutes the core of the agitations of the people of the Niger Delta, whose region is bedevilled by the exportation of its wealth to fuel the civilization of other countries. Proceeds and revenue generated from crude is stashed in foreign reserves while the people wallow in squalor. Maier similarly denounces the legitimacy of the audacity of the West to pass verbal judgement on the reality in Nigeria,

It is hypocritical of the West to blame Nigeria of corruption, fraud, and drug running and to demand that Nigerians own up to their foreign debt while at the same time allowing the funds garnered from such nefarious dealings to be deposited in Western banks (xxii).

Maier's call for even-handedness and adherence to morality points to rhetoric of globalization. That is, it claims to resolve conflict to ensure the social welfare of all, and treat all components as equal is called to question. It would seem, in a bid to cross borders of race and region, the West and the East have resorted to hypocrisy. This is evident in the way they let corruption sly and instead laud disreputable administrations without interrogating the concerns of the masses with regards to embezzlement of public funds, bribery and diversion. Peel puts it this way,

London seem more interested in perpetuating the perennial-and seemingly pathological-Western habit of painting African countries with a crude roller instead of a fine brush... it is a peculiar kind of reverse racism, with Westerners treating 'progressive' Africans like china that might shatter if subjected to the normal wear and tear of political debate (175).

This attitude seems to suit the capitalists, who focus on what could be garnered from a region rather than the socioeconomic development which is expected to be witnessed in a country like Nigeria that generates high revenue from trade in crude. The dehumanizing situation in Nigeria is pushed to the background, instead, the deep hypocrisy entrenched in oil politics flourishes.

The idea of a new international scramble for Africa- and in particular for its energy reserves-is hardly original. But what's striking up close is how intense and amoral the process is. Both the USA and China are wooing countries in the region, including Nigeria that have poor records on holding credible elections and respecting human rights (152).

To these countries, China and USA, the foul cry of deprivations in the midst of abundance was Nigeria's problem and not theirs; their interest lay in the economic benefits that they could profit from through maintaining good trade relations with the region. To interrogate the legitimacy of the claims of the masses would tamper with the ego of its rulers whose cooperation enhances duo's enterprise through accommodating trade policies.

From the forgoing, it would be important to return to the conceptualize globalization along Forster and Clark's view in their article, 'Ecological Imperialism: the Curse of Capitalism', where they see ecological imperialism as a grand design by the centre to rob 'the periphery of its natural wealth and exploiting ecological resources'. We can argue that this in

itself stems out of deep-seated bigotry that sees the centre as more significant, the very notion of universality in globalization negates the needs of the periphery for the benefit of the centre. This system is systematically designed to strategically facilitate wealth to be gathered to the centre, while the ecological consequences are disposed of depending on the disposal of those who control the means. It is this single mindedness that is responsible for the environmental destruction in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, whose ecology has been rendered sterile by activities of oil exploration. The looming ecological disaster has constituted ecocritical concerns for writers.

4.3 Dialectics of Environmentalism in the Niger Delta

As the different opposing forces in the Delta lay claims to delivery of truth, and struggle to legitimize their claims, what they share in common are the stories of the woes brought on them by the resources in their lands. In *A Swamp Full of Dollars*, Richard Grimu takes Peel on an excursion to abandoned exploration sites, to provide the history leading to the distrust of the activities of the Oil Companies, using Akassa as a case study of ‘the imperial-era fossils strewed across the world, exploited, discarded and ignored’. Grimu recalls the promises of Europeans to the community, ‘the dilapidation was a sign, he said, of the decline of a community that had been designated specially by the British because of its importance in the palm oil trade, but was now just one anonymous, impoverished village...’ (33). The ‘relics of British occupation’ corroborate his story. One epitaph tells the story of violence that dates to that period, it reads ‘our dear brother Henry Russell, who died on 1 March 1895, in the midst of the conflict between Britain and the people of Brass’ (34). This incident also gives insight into the warped psychology of the natives in the well-hid intention of the imperialist to propagate his sole ability to provide visionary leadership. As this notion clash in postcolonial Nigeria,

...His remarks was an unsettling illustration of how imperial polices of divide and rule cascade down the years on the tongues of local storytellers, setting neighbouring communities against each other as they compete to make their differing versions of history the universally acknowledged truth (34).

The ideological divide which each group occupies accounts for the rise of ethically oriented militants who fought for justice for their land, from Asari Dokubo’s Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF) to Olotu’s Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta

(MEND). The major thrust of their struggle was put at ‘armed struggle for control of oil stolen by the Nigerian State and handed over illegitimately to the international oil companies’ (3). This raised consciousness stems from the call for resolution of the issue of resource ownership and control that was perceived as unjust by many, especially the Ijaws. Giving an ultimatum to the oil companies to cease operations until the government could review the land decree, part of the statement released read, ‘we are tired of gas flaring, oil spillages, blowouts, and being labelled saboteurs and terrorists,’(8). This is captured by Kaine Agary in *Yellow Yellow* and replayed in the fire incident at Roko where the villages are under the siege of oil and their woes are not treated as victims but as vandals. Just as the Ogoni had grown angry over pollution problems and other side-effects of oil (7), writers like Ojaide have come strongly against the land decree which is seen as a savage tool employed by military dictators to perpetuate oppression.

As the people lament the waste of their lands with nothing to show for it, the Oil Companies lay claims to development projects as if it were compensations or privileges bestowed on these communities for accommodating the violation of their land. Tamuno also shares this view, when he says, “‘their governments continue to hang on to Derivation formulas, as if "compensation" rather than "prevention" of state-sponsored terror, as already indicated was an ethically sound solution to pollution.’ (164).

Again, it is the salve neglect that accounts for unplanned health facilities without personnel flung here and there in the Niger Delta. Basil Omiyi’s retort to Peel when this issue is mentioned is, ‘Shell has been an integral part of an economy and country that have simply not worked for their people’. In his opinion, ‘People forget how backward the nation was at independence in 1960,’ he says[....]’(167). This is perhaps an indication of the perception of Shell that he represents and tries to absolve of every allegation of its role in the devastation of the Niger Delta. On the other hand, Chevron admits, ‘...its system of showering some villages with money and projects had left other areas feeling ‘alienated and underprivileged’ (164). This accounted for the marginal wealth in the region that bred conflict. It is in the light of the multi faceted and multi dimensional crises that Peel states ,

...damage done by labelling the places where the companies operated ‘host communities’, entitled to benefits such as infrastructure, employment and building

contracts. The effect was to create divisions, leading to a potential for dispute between people who were not necessarily antipathetic previously (164).

Such 'preferential' treatment translates into marginal distribution of wealth and the spectacle of economic paradoxes that militants from the region resist. What is more striking is the way Peel redeems the image of these armed militias: 'I noted that these militants, for whom shootouts with rival gangs were a fact of life, were surprising punctilious about making sure I didn't get my feet wet' (5).

Peel's eye witness account of the care given to him is not to undermine them but to point to their humanity and so can be reached. As if to legitimize their struggle by suggesting theirs was a case of meeting violence with violence and that they were not mindless youths. They are sects who have assumed responsibility for their society's plight and who fight to end the injustice and oppression against their region and its exploitation. With an undertone of naturalism, Peel, just like Ojaide, argues that there were identifiable or justifiable underlying causes for the actions or outcome of these groups springing up in the Niger Delta. Written at a time, when amnesty was a vision, Peel's pointer to the humanity of the militants seems also to suggest that these young people could be reached through meaningful interaction that could generate the required responses needed for peace and stability in the region at that time. Efforts not made not until the administration of late Yar'Adua. The view point of Peel is consistent with the tenet of naturalism which believes that the environment and social conditions evoke emotions that render human reason or logic numb. This perhaps explains the inherent contradictions in the methods adopted by the militants in the Niger Delta in the fight for the restoration of their environment.

Peel is no doubt a social realist who is impressed by the heightened awareness of the masses on the oppression meted to them, '...I am struck again by how the Delta's problems are linked not simply to poverty, but to a rising consciousness of it' (184). This is a general marker by socialists, especially Marxists, on the readiness of a people to shape their reality. Peel interrogates these social experiences and tells the stories of the wretched of the earth, from the creeks of the Niger Delta to the slums of Lagos. He identifies the general disillusionment with social reality. An instance is when Freeman asserts, 'I became a militant because of the spoiling of my people...we have oil but no development. That is why I have said I will fight until my last bullet — until whoever will kill me'(185). And as if in Nimi's

voice in Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground*, Rueben Clifford reiterates, 'we are jobless...the best way is to catch you people, flog you that is the way we live'. Kidnapping whites was perhaps their concept of the only means left to dislodge expatriates from the region. Peel believes Nigeria is ready for a revolution and he has become an advocate for a new social order that would take every section of the population seriously. Through reading his work, we assume he is dialectically opposed to capitalism, especially when he comments that, 'the Lagos cityscape reflects the Nigerian oil narrative of ostentatious plenty amid mammoth poverty'(75) '...private elite enclave have flourished while public life has been starved of resources.' (77).

The book brings to light the perspectives of different players as much as Peel's. It highlights the delusion of colonialism, through Willy; one of his guides to the creeks echoes the blame on Dog-eat-dog capitalists, 'if white people like you had been in charge, there would be no problem... because you are not dubious. But we Nigerians are dubious (191).' This tells the tale of a people whose hopes hinge on the basest of things and so are ready to see the possibility of solution in every available source.

Peel negates the type of environmental advocacy in the Niger Delta perpetrated by militants by bringing to light the contradictions inherent in their methods in the struggle to reclaim their lands. Here again, '...the contradictions flow as freely as his words: he is angry with the government, yet he spent two years serving in the administration of DSP Alamieyeseigha, the man at the centre of the alleged graft case' (195). It tells of the warped orientation of the people and a struggle predicated on disillusionment but driven on a broken compass. It is this broken compass that enslaves the people, as they see nothing wrong with one of theirs being corrupt.

Although he identifies with the cause of the people, Peel observes the counter reactive influence of the military struggle. The activity of bunkering undermines environmental advocacy and exposes the environment to threats of spillages and gas flares that could lead to near extermination of the region. The atmosphere created by these militants is that of insecurity and terror, rather than a sense of assurance of the safety of the very people they claim to be agitating for. The dissonance between environmentalism and polemics of sustainable development unleashes terror on the communities,

As he continues to fire...I see a terrified-looking little girl shuffle a smaller boy protectively behind her. These children, i realise, are growing to see guns as a normal part of life...ask him why he is doing this and terrifying his own people, the very community he is supposed to be fighting for...the ideology of struggle become smothered by the seduction of the absolute power offered by the rule of the rifle (194).

The observation above brings home the high levels of militarization in the Niger Delta. These undermine the militants' cause as violence is no respecter of ideologies and could engulf entire communities. These youths are consumed by their desire to sabotage the operations of oil multinationals through activities that are dialectically opposed to their proclamation of reclaiming the environment for their region. Peel interrogates the source of funds to acquire the kind of arms that they have access to, and Freeman's revelation gives insight to the cyclic manifestation of violence in the society. The oil companies exploit the region and the militants retaliate through reprisal attacks on oil installations which products are in turn bunkered to prosecute the war with attendant effects on the environment,'.. "the militants take oil from the pipelines to sell on the black market. In other words, just like Asari's men, they finance themselves by exploiting the very oil industry that blighted their region for half a century"' (186).

These activities in themselves contribute to the degradation of the environment, just as oil spills and gas flares. The exposed pipelines could, in the event of collision lead to colossal destruction of an entire ecosystem. The combination of firearms and oil in the region are deadly to the environment and their interactions are frequently courted in the Niger Delta; where military clampdown and clashes between militants and state security force are a common experience.

4.4 Rhetoric of Development in *A Swamp Full Of Dollars*

The process of deconstructing society and the prevailing ideology that clogs its progressive development constitute the mandate of a writer. The image of a country on the brink of collapse is evoked in Peel's narrative; statements like, 'fraud and mismanagement since independence' help to give a historicity to the level of institutionalised corruption that has eaten into the fabric of the Nigerian life. With the demise of military regime and the return of democracy, the PDP led government, sustained over sixteen years, heralded the tempo of

visionless leadership. Under the presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo, the self-accolade of nation rebranding is interrogated through the examination of contradictions that become evident in short-term evaluations,

yet even the president's own propaganda suggested there was considerable gap between his dreams and what was happening on ground...a magazine published by the presidency, a feature on the police inspector General, Tafa Balewa, described him 'leading a war against crime'. In 2005, the same Balogun was sent to Jail after being convicted of charges relating to the alleged theft of more than \$100m of public money (174).

The trouble of meeting rhetoric with action continues to pose a problem through actions that denounced the present elevated position assumed by democracy in Nigeria. Particularly, the rhetoric of public office accountability under democratic rule comes under scrutiny in the investigations carried out on Rivers State's spending, particularly its arbitrary award of contracts.

The full scale of the mismanagement was clear in the draft official Rivers state budget that Jaja had been unable or unwilling to provide...flickering through it, i was not surprised. It shows how misleading his proud citations of health and education projects were (172).

The clearest indicator of underdevelopment is the budget. The allocation are in the Rivers budget do not fit the projects on the ground. These discrepancies forestall the needed level of development that transparency in public funds dissemination could effect. Peel noted the irony of the maxim of the PDP led administration 'power to the people', through diaconal and unpopular projects. The margin between the cost of government and public development projects were staggeringly deceitful,

Spending on Government House had risen by almost a third and now accounted for almost 5 per cent of the state budget. The government house gardening bill had more than tripled in a year to £20,000 [...] Near the end was perhaps the most poignant entry: it was the spending on horticulture in Port Harcourt, which has once been known as the 'Garden City'. An annual budget of just £60- less than 1 per cent of the Government House gardening bill- was set aside for grass-cutting in Isaac Boro Park, the main public green space (173-174).

This open disregard for the need of the people and the restoration and preservation of the environment of the Niger Delta region is given time and space by Peel through an analysis of government's projects whose primary vision was in making 'future governance more convenient, and effective'(173). Governor Odili's administration was perhaps the best illustration of the lack of vision of Nigerian leaders as given by Peel, 'the ministry of Justice had a larger allocation for cars than law books and journals'. This mindless opulence goes back to the post-independence era, characterized by government-centred projects to the detriment of her citizenry.

Peel uses this lack of discretion by these leaders to question the people's claim to readiness for change, in their lack of awareness of the public disregard for their social needs. 'Schools were crumbling even as official places were being built. Nations had revolted over less' (172). He also noticed the ignorance of the masses as to where their loyalties lay, 'terrible inconsistency in its choice of friends and enemies. One of the men sitting around while Orumo talks has a T-shirt that proclaims his total support for DSP Alamiyeseigha, the disgraced former Bayelsa governor' (187). And in the Creeks, he spots, 'A man dressed in an orange Shell Jumpsuit'(11)

These in themselves may be directly interpreted as implications of poverty or the lack of consciousness of both the oppressed and the oppressor, but either way it shows an accommodating atmosphere for oppression to thrive; a Nigeria where corruption is embraced as a prerequisite for governance and where there was no alternative hegemony. Peel also points out the exploitation of the downtrodden by the privileged class. Asari Dokubo exploits his region, and this has come to light recently as evident in his meddling in matters of state. To Peel, confrontational issues of infrastructural decay and denial of basic social amenities should be at the fore of environmental campaigns, and should constitute the motivation for the struggle.

As Nigeria is enshrouded in gaining international recognition on its newly born democracy, the president's commitment rested in building public image and gaining international approval to legitimise his government, as evident in his preoccupation with trips abroad to the detriment of the grassroots problems that rocked the security of Nigeria. As characteristic of most African breeds of democracy, unrealistic dialogue of conflict resolution is embarked upon,

Asari flew to Abuja, the Capital, to broker a peace deal with President Obasanjo under which he agreed to disarm in exchange for vague commitments to giving the Ijaw greater self determination and control of the oil wealth on their land. Obasanjo condemned 'undue militancy' in the Delta, although he admitted the region's people had legitimate grievances and he criticised local officials for failing to bring development [...] (19).

These series of events was proven tantamount to empty rhetoric, as up to the administration of the late Yar'adua, efforts to resolve the issue was not made. Whether this inaction was because of the hypocrisy surrounding the unaccounted security bill, or that the sustained violence was a bargaining chip for Nigerian government in the negotiations of oil politics are different matters all together, but the bottom-line here is the lack of affiliation to humanity, and matters of environment and security apparent in the insensitivity of government to the social welfare of the people of the region.

From the foregoing, it would not be an overemphasis to mention that, true development eludes Nigeria because of the inability to back rhetoric with actions. Progressive development would only emerge when ideology is translated into positive actions that would ensure a change in the existing order. The beginning is with a committed leadership and a patriotic citizenry that put the nation first. When this is done, then the needs of all citizens, irrespective of creed, class or clan would assume significance. Once this is achieved, then will there be peace even in the creeks for both human and non-human elements in the eco-system.

Having examined the work of Michael Peel, *A Swamp Full of Dollars*, from its title which points at the neglect of the region to the solutions he proffers, the next chapter is the summary and conclusion which pulls all the disparate arguments together.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

In the representation of oil issues in the Niger Delta, vivid experience takes precedence in the writer's imagination. Realism does serve the purpose of the writers on the environment. The reality of environmental degradation, destruction of vegetation and aquatic life is so gross that these writers disregard the sanctity of the laws of creativity and delve into the realm of contradictions. This is done in order to arrive at the possibility of affirmative action towards achieving a truly democratic society. In contemporary Nigerian literature, the threat to national security, wanton corruption, fundamentalism, and political crisis with gross destruction of lives and properties have assumed a central position and have been directly attributed to poverty because of the departure from agriculture due to the action and inaction of state actors. No society can develop in the face of high level of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, political and social instability and inequality in income distribution – realities that the total dependence on oil has introduced into Nigeria. Nigerian literature often dwells on those issues that define the outcome of the society it seeks to represent. Also, the issues of ethnic conflict and youth restiveness have been brought into focus as they breed insecurity and underdevelopment leading to poverty. When the prime population, which should constitute the mainstay of the economic labour force is not engaged, social vices flourish and are interpreted as a direct consequence of the neglect of this group as delivered in *A Swamp Full of Dollars* and *The Activist* respectively. So the militancy in the Niger Delta is stimulated by this factor of economic docility rather than a deep sense of environmental advocacy.

Nigerian literature in the era of military regimes often project democracy as an emancipatory tool that would enhance social welfare in a number of ways, but writers soon became disillusioned with the lack of social vision of its breed of democratic leaders. Democracy in Nigeria has in one over one decade seen a rise in corruption and poverty simultaneously. This accounts for the shift in preoccupation of writers, for instance to the interrogation of the concept of development.

Writers have always advocated for a rejection of the Eurocentric concept of development. They proffer qualitative pointers towards improving the living standards of the

entire populace. Their works emphasise the quality of human life to include basic needs like adequate food, water, shelter, clothing, education, and social amenities like good roads, electricity and basic health infrastructure and access to them by the people. Literature has often made a caricature of the visionless outcome of the new breed of political leaders and the cyclic manifestation of government's arbitrary policies as observed in their acquisition enterprises and deregulation projects.

Under the guise of eradicating poverty, different administrations have embarked on ad-hoc agencies, which become avenues for squandering public funds. As proven time and again, these schemes of supposed poverty eradication do not confront the real issue of unemployment. Thus, resulting in non-implementation and accounting for the adoption of new acronyms and nomenclatures, when a new administration takes over. Writers agitate for long term solutions instead of relief programmes by government, usually hijacked by officials as payment or royalties to thugs, supporters and family members.

These rural development palliatives like that in *The Activist*, where government distributes nets to fishermen is typical of projects that lack social vision and are informed by the need to devise means of manipulation and diversion of public funds as political royalties, culminating in lack of sustainability by successive governments. This is evident, at every change of government where the programmes assume new names to cater for the needs of the present administration, rather than the common man. This reduces the people to mere puppets, preventing active participation in the political system.

From the forgoing, it must be emphasised that indicators used to group countries into 'developing' or 'developed' classes that do not take into consideration peculiar needs of nations or the different stages of needs of individual societies must be debunked. Social indicators like life expectancy, infant mortality, nutrition and access to social amenities like potable water, sanitation and health care, education, etc, must be markers of stages of development. For of what benefit is a stable economy or construction of skyscrapers to the common man riddled with unmet basic needs.

The distortion and integration of the Nigerian economy into the global capitalist system has for instance led to the death of the peasant economy. The shift from agriculture that harnesses the physical ecology to petro-culture that thrives in the dastardly destruction of

the physical environment is responsible for the systemic rise of social problems in Nigeria. The Niger Delta population became dependent on government and the inability of government to attend to their basic needs accounted for the rebellion in the region. Self-reliance must be viewed as key to development and to ensure its sustainability, empowerment of local resource user groups must be ensured in the capacity of local communities to manage and use natural resources. Implicit here is an assumption that local communities possess the knowledge to conserve and manage the resources on which they and their families depend.

When the living conditions of rural communities are improved, the rural community would be sustained and it would retain its population, which has been drifting to urban areas. Nigeria should direct developmental strategies towards ameliorating the conditions of the poorest members of the society. Furthermore, long-term answers to the current derivation formula should be sought. Development accounts for issues issues like democracy, human rights, environmental control, population control, gender equality amongst others. Most writers believe that, to put democracy in its true perspective, a revolution must be initiated so as to ensure the realization of the creative potentials of individuals. It is believed that, creating a new social order would threaten the internal class relations in the society and the external interests that seek to influence through meddling or undue interference would lose its place.

Conclusion

The fusion of ecological thought with the realist tradition seeks to provide a realistic social vision for a stable political system in a stable environment. However, stable political systems and secularism become irrelevant when they do not have direct bearing on the common man. Violence, as articulated in the Activist's involvement in oil bunkering may be conceived as revolutionary, a path which every human society, agitating for change must take. We notice how power is ascribed to nature and the contradictory relationship between man and nature, which threatens the influence of nature in human affairs.

Also noticed is how urban drift has led to slums springing up in cities. Unless there is improvement of life in the rural areas, many more would be left stranded on the streets of Lagos and border settlements in Abuja and other 'urban' areas would yet expand rapidly. The realities of ecological imperialism, injustice, oppression and exploitation constitute themes generated from the society, which the writer seeks to mirror. Where Peel represents these

realities starkly with the pervading disillusionment and pessimism which are responses generated from the society, Ojaide artistically refracts these realities to provide a social vision for his society, in accordance with the realist idea of 'art for life's sake' as against 'art for art sake', to map the possibility of change in the overthrow of institutionalized social and political order. Perhaps, the recent change in the politics of Nigeria exemplifies the power in the desire of a people for change and where this is backed by collective affirmative action, the hope for progressive development may yet materialise into the positive change envisaged.

For this to be achieved, however, the society must negate individualism, the core of anthropocentrism and instead seek a social order that would embrace all elements in the eco-space. Only then, would the society be rid of global conspiracy and hypocrisy that pervade socio-economic relationships today, whose aims are in personal gains. The core promoters of anthropocentrism as highlighted in the Background to Study are bigotry and egocentrism, which give rise to domination of species which are considered inferior.

The tendency to promote the development of the 'centre' must be denounced. This would in turn inform a reversal in the exploitation of the environment to the point of devastation. Society is made up of various interrelated parts, which can be understood primarily in their relationship with one another, and the entire eco-system. As a guide, this research believes that putting the environment into perspective in socio-economic projects of government would avert collateral effect of environmental degradation on the means of livelihood of the larger community.

Based on the given statement of problem, the research aim and objectives, this study concludes that, there is a relationship between the physical destruction of the environment and socio-economic realities in the society. The discovery of oil and its exploration in the Niger Delta play significant roles in the shift from agrarian pre-occupation to dependency on oil because of its lucrative enterprise that stimulates cash flow, mostly unaccounted for. This, in turn contributes largely in fuelling corruption and amplification of gaps between classes in the society.

It is believed that the restoration of the environment and introduction of controls on the exploration of the environment would minimise the impunity of corruption perpetrated by the upper class. When the common man possesses the power to harness his environment and is imparted with the skills needed to nurture the physical environment, the capitalists' crave for

monopoly would be curbed. This, however, cannot be attained without close monitoring through effective leadership. The state has an obligation to help instil a sense of environmentalism in the society through enforcement of reserve spaces like game reserves, grazing areas, parks and relaxation spots, etc. Only then would Nigeria restore and reclaim resources lost to environmental degradation. The task of the writer then is to amplify the need for environmental consciousness while coming strongly against urbanism, globalism, capitalism, and Diaspora fever. These forces militate against the crusade for the return to land which writers like Ojaide and Peel spearhead. This is what has lent them the tag of ecocritics who seek to promote a sound relationship between man and the physical environment while decrying the neglect and exploitation of man. However, all of these will achieve nothing without leadership committed these goals.

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