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PROSPECTS OF CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN POETRY IN PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Abubakar Bappa (Ph.D.)

Department of English and Literary Studies, Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State, Nigeria,

Email: abubakarbappd65@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Environmental degradation is a critical issue in Nigeria, exacerbated by poor governance, natural resource exploitation, and inadequate environmental policies. This paper explores how contemporary Nigerian poetry, particularly through the works of Tanure Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan* (2007) and Idris Amali's *Efeega War of Ants* (2014), addresses ecological concerns and advocates for environmental sustainability. Using eco-criticism as the primary theoretical framework, the study analyzes the poets' use of vivid imagery, symbolism, and allegory to reflect the environmental crises facing Nigeria, including deforestation, oil spills, and land degradation. The analysis highlights how Ojaide and Amali's poetry serves as a form of environmental activism, engaging readers in urgent conversations about sustainability and environmental justice. The paper also discusses the challenges Nigerian poetry faces in promoting environmental sustainability, such as limited readership, cultural barriers, and insufficient institutional support. However, it emphasizes the potential for poetry to shape public discourse, integrate with environmental advocacy, and influence global environmental debates. The paper concludes by offering actionable recommendations for leveraging poetry as a tool to raise awareness and foster ecological consciousness, contributing to both local and global efforts for environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Nigerian poetry, environmental sustainability, eco-criticism, Tanure Ojaide, Idris Amali, ecological justice, environmental advocacy

INTRODUCTION

Environmental degradation is one of the most pressing global issues of the 21st century, with developing countries, including Nigeria, facing a disproportionate

share of the consequences. The country has experienced significant environmental challenges such as deforestation, oil spills, and land degradation, particularly in regions

like the Niger Delta (Nzeadibe et al., 2011). These environmental crises have socio-political roots, including poor governance, exploitation of natural resources, and inadequate environmental policies (Obi, 2010). Amid these challenges, literature, particularly poetry, has emerged as a platform for engaging with environmental issues, reflecting the intersection of art, culture, and activism (Trexler, 2015).

Nigerian poetry, known for its deep engagement with socio-political concerns, has increasingly turned to environmental themes as poets seek to raise awareness about ecological crises. Writers like Tanure Ojaide and Idris Amali exemplify this trend by using their poetry to not only depict the physical environment but also to critique human actions that exacerbate environmental degradation. Their works fit into the broader genre of eco-literature, which emphasizes the relationship between literature and the environment, often calling for a change in human attitudes towards nature (Buell, 2005).

This paper explores the ecological concerns of contemporary Nigerian poetry with particular reference to Tanure Ojaide's *The Tale of The Harmattan* (2007) and Idris Amali's *Efeega War of Ants* (2014). Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan* (2007) and Amali's *Efeega War of Ants* (2014) are two significant contributions to this genre. These poets address themes of ecological destruction, the exploitation of natural resources, and the need for environmental justice, linking the environmental challenges

in Nigeria to wider global concerns (Ojaide, 2007; Amali, 2014). By examining their works, this article explores how contemporary Nigerian poetry can promote environmental sustainability by fostering a deeper understanding of the environmental challenges and advocating for positive change.

As the world grapples with climate change and other environmental crises, poetry offers a unique avenue for engaging the public in conversations about sustainability. In particular, Nigerian poets have the potential to influence both local and global discourses on environmental justice, positioning literature as a critical tool for ecological activism (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996). Fitch et al (2020) posit on this questions begging for concrete answers:

How can we best think about this degradation? Should it change how we think about being human? And how we might act differently? The field of environmental ethics arises in the English – speaking world in the 1970s in response to these concerns. It principally understood its task to consist in determining the scope of moral consideration. What in nature has value and why. While western tradition centered value on the human being, proposals were put forward to extend the moral real to higher primates, all sentient animals, all living things eco system an even to the earth as a while other voices soon emphasized, critical of the framework and presupposition of this extension

list or at list moralizing approach, most notably in the schools of deep ecology.

From the foregoing, the critic's lamentation hints on the lingering crisis of existence that makes further difficulties eminent in the country as things are gradually falling apart. A typical example is the recent flood in Maduguri, Northeastern Nigeria. The dam washed away a large section of the city which was neglected for decades without proper maintainers, latter it over flowed and destroy entire capital in which human and natural rescors are destroyed. In addition to this Ogoe – Chimezie (2018:1) states that:

The writer is sensitive to circumstances on the earth including those that threaten the survival of the human environment. Human activities that result in oil spills, extinction of species, depletions of the ozone layer, acid rain and afforestation come under the writers concepts of environment and register in his consciousness the result in his poetry drama or prose transmit values that facilities the projection and good use of the environment and natural resources and will further help to erase the illusion that man lives above the natural world as such turns it into an object of exploitation. This part of the success of literary art lies in the ability to reflect physical environmental realities in the contents.

Nature itself has many ways of indicating her position in the scheme of things by

threatening or destroying human habituation, especially when the rain flows or through excessive wind due to afforestation and other human activities on the earth surface. This may be the reason for a more shift in terms of thematic focus to Eco criticism and also the cognitive shift from old modes of conception to the call for promoting environmental protection and sustainability. Efforts towards promoting sustainability are imperative and worthwhile. Worst calamities against the environment have reared their ugly faces and continue to raise havoc in different ways that necessitate global submits in Copenhagen (2008) Rio (2010) Johannesburg (2011) and Paris (2012) as all these and other submits are on environment and sustainable development goals (SDGs) plainly lay more emphasis on the place of environmental protection and its sustainability. This struggle for sustainability is undertaken through various means. The latest innovations of advancing sustainable resource recline on the use of community based organizations and writers to change their thematic focus to pressing societal issues that is where the issue of contemporary poets arise. Indeed no effort could bear fruits without integrating the mass minds through raising their consciousness and awareness skills and environmental friendly minds. This paper sets to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Explore the connection between poetry and environmental consciousness, focusing on how

Nigerian poetry reflects ecological concerns.

- 2) Identify and analyze the key environmental challenges affecting Nigeria, as depicted in contemporary Nigerian poetry.
- 3) Examine the ecological themes present in Tanure Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan* and Idris Amali's *Efeega War of Ants*, highlighting their relevance to environmental sustainability.
- 4) Provide actionable recommendations for promoting environmental sustainability through literary works, particularly poetry.

In eco-criticism the discussion is on the growing concerns over environmental degradation that is adversely affecting the generality of individuals. Both writers and critics at this point are showcasing their interest in serious or gave inducing problems on the exploitation of nature incessantly. According to Onwukah (2018-12):

Critics are of the view that the images presented in eco-literary works are distorted, obscure and unreal as they are subject to the mental and emotional state of the writer and / or critics. No matter amount of criticism, that this theory that this theory has generated, it still lends itself to social relevance, since it aims at preserving nature and man.

From the above it can be inferred that eco-criticism or environmental advocacy concerns itself with radical agitation and mobilization of all social forces in the protection and preservation of natural

environment. It attempts create awareness of contradictions within the community, particularly concerning the rural dwellers.

Literature Review

The intersection between literature and environmental sustainability has increasingly gained attention within literary studies, particularly through the lens of eco-criticism. This theoretical approach examines how literature portrays the natural world and the impact of human activity on the environment (Buell, 2005). In the context of Nigerian poetry, the exploration of environmental themes is rooted in a rich tradition of socio-political engagement, as poets often use their work to address issues of national significance, including ecological degradation and sustainability (Okuyade, 2013).

Eco-Criticism and Environmental Sustainability in Literature

Eco-criticism, which emerged as a formal discipline in the 1990s, focuses on the relationship between literature and the environment. As Glotfelty (1996) notes, eco-criticism seeks to analyze how literary works reflect ecological issues and promote environmental awareness. Scholars like Buell (2005) have emphasized the role of literature in fostering ecological consciousness, arguing that it can influence societal attitudes toward environmental sustainability. The application of eco-criticism to African literature has expanded the scope of the field, with African writers contributing to global environmental discourse by highlighting the unique

ecological challenges faced by their countries.

In recent years, African eco-criticism has gained momentum, with scholars exploring how African literature, particularly poetry, addresses environmental concerns. Okuyade (2013) argues that African writers have long engaged with issues of nature and land, particularly in response to colonial exploitation and postcolonial environmental crises. This form of environmental literature often critiques the destructive practices of both foreign and local actors, calling for more sustainable interactions with the natural world.

Nigerian Poetry and Environmental Themes

Nigerian poetry, known for its engagement with socio-political issues, has increasingly turned to environmental concerns in response to the country's ecological crises. Poets such as Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, and Idris Amali have made significant contributions to this discourse by addressing themes of environmental degradation, resource exploitation, and the need for ecological justice (Ushie, 2010).

Osundare, in particular, has been a pioneering figure in Nigerian eco-poetry, with his work often centered on the interconnectedness of humans and the environment. As Ushie (2010) points out, Osundare's poetry reflects a deep concern for the ecological challenges facing Nigeria, particularly deforestation, soil erosion, and pollution. His works call for a return to traditional ecological values, which

emphasize harmony between humans and nature.

Tanure Ojaide, another prominent Nigerian poet, builds on this tradition by focusing on the environmental devastation in the Niger Delta, a region that has been severely impacted by oil exploration and exploitation. Ojaide's poetry frequently critiques the environmental destruction caused by multinational corporations, highlighting the need for environmental justice (Ojaide, 2007). His collection *The Tale of the Harmattan* (2007) is particularly relevant to this study, as it uses the Harmattan wind as a metaphor for the destructive forces that have ravaged Nigeria's environment. Ojaide's eco-poetry is not only a reflection of environmental degradation but also a call to action, urging for sustainable practices and policies.

Idris Amali, whose work is examined alongside Ojaide's in this study, similarly engages with environmental issues, though his approach often incorporates allegory and metaphor. In *Efeega War of Ants* (2014), Amali uses the metaphor of a war among ants to explore themes of environmental conflict, resource scarcity, and ecological imbalance. His work reflects a broader concern for the future of Nigeria's environment, advocating for a more sustainable and equitable relationship between humans and nature (Amali, 2014).

Environmental Challenges in Nigeria.

The environmental issues plaguing Nigeria are well-documented, with scholars

highlighting a range of ecological crises, including deforestation, desertification, pollution, and oil-related environmental damage (Nzeadibe et al., 2011; Obi, 2010). The Niger Delta, in particular, has suffered severe ecological damage due to oil extraction, leading to loss of biodiversity, soil degradation, and water pollution (Obi, 2010). These environmental challenges are not only ecological in nature but also deeply tied to socio-political and economic factors, including poor governance, corruption, and the exploitation of natural resources by multinational corporations. According to Nzeadibe et al. (2011), the impact of climate change and environmental degradation in Nigeria is exacerbated by a lack of adequate policy response and the marginalization of communities most affected by these crises. These issues are reflected in Nigerian poetry, which often serves as a platform for expressing resistance to environmental injustice and advocating for sustainability.

The Role of Poetry in Promoting Environmental Sustainability

Poetry has long been recognized as a powerful medium for expressing complex social and environmental concerns. As Trexler (2015) notes, literature, and particularly poetry, can play a vital role in shaping public perceptions of environmental issues by offering imaginative representations of ecological crises. In the context of Nigeria, poetry has the potential to raise awareness about the environmental challenges the country faces and to promote sustainable practices.

Ojaide and Amali's works, in particular, demonstrate the potential of poetry to engage with environmental sustainability. By using vivid imagery, symbolism, and allegory, these poets draw attention to the ecological damage caused by human activity while also advocating for a more sustainable future. Their poetry serves not only as a reflection of Nigeria's environmental struggles but also as a call to action, encouraging both individual and collective responsibility for preserving the environment. The literature reviewed suggests that Nigerian poetry, through its engagement with environmental themes, holds significant potential for promoting environmental sustainability. Poets like Tanure Ojaide and Idris Amali have used their work to critique environmental degradation and advocate for ecological justice, positioning poetry as a crucial tool in the fight for sustainability. As Nigeria continues to face severe environmental challenges, the role of poetry in raising awareness and promoting sustainable practices becomes increasingly important.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in **eco-criticism**, a theoretical approach that examines the relationship between literature and the environment. Eco-criticism emerged in the late 20th century as a response to growing environmental concerns and aims to explore how literature reflects, critiques, and influences ecological consciousness (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). In the context of this research, eco-criticism provides a lens

through which the environmental themes in Tanure Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan* (2007) and Idris Amali's *Efeega War of Ants* (2014) can be analyzed and understood.

Eco-criticism is particularly useful for analyzing Nigerian poetry, where themes of environmental degradation, deforestation, pollution, and resource exploitation are prevalent. According to Buell (2005), eco-criticism seeks to highlight the ways in which literature can raise awareness about ecological issues and advocate for environmental justice. This study applies eco-critical theory to investigate how Ojaide and Amali use their poetry to reflect the environmental crises facing Nigeria and promote sustainability. Through their works, these poets contribute to the global discourse on environmental conservation while addressing the specific ecological challenges in Nigeria, such as oil spills, deforestation, and climate change (Ojaide, 2007; Amali, 2014).

Eco-criticism and African literature

African literature, particularly Nigerian poetry, has a long history of engaging with socio-political issues, including the environmental impact of colonialism and postcolonial resource exploitation. The eco-critical framework used in this study builds on the idea that African writers often merge ecological concerns with broader issues of justice, rights, and sustainability (Okuyade, 2013). Eco-criticism in African contexts highlights the unique environmental

challenges facing the continent, such as desertification, loss of biodiversity, and water pollution, which are exacerbated by both local and global factors (Ushie, 2010). By applying eco-critical theory to the works of Ojaide and Amali, this study examines how their poetry reflects the environmental destruction caused by industrialization, especially in the Niger Delta, and advocates for ecological harmony. Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan* portrays the harmful effects of deforestation and resource extraction, while Amali's *Efeega War of Ants* uses allegory to discuss the balance of power in ecological systems and the consequences of environmental neglect.

Postcolonial Eco-Criticism

In addition to traditional eco-criticism, this study incorporates elements of **postcolonial eco-criticism**, which focuses on the environmental legacies of colonialism and the ongoing exploitation of natural resources in formerly colonized nations. This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant to Nigerian poetry, where the environmental degradation of the Niger Delta and other regions is tied to the legacy of colonial resource extraction and contemporary multinational corporations' practices (Obi, 2010). Postcolonial eco-criticism emphasizes the need for environmental justice, which includes not only protecting ecosystems but also addressing the socio-economic inequalities that contribute to environmental degradation. Through a postcolonial eco-critical lens, Ojaide and Amali's works are seen not just as literary reflections of

Nigeria's environmental problems, but as active critiques of the historical and ongoing exploitation of the country's natural resources. Their poetry serves as a form of resistance, advocating for both environmental and social justice.

Literature as Environmental Activism

Eco-criticism also posits that literature can be a form of activism, mobilizing readers toward environmental consciousness and action (Trexler, 2015). By engaging readers with vivid imagery and emotionally charged narratives, poetry has the potential to make abstract environmental issues more tangible and immediate. This study explores how Ojaide and Amali use poetic devices such as metaphor, personification, and symbolism to draw attention to ecological destruction and inspire a sense of urgency about environmental sustainability.

In conclusion, eco-criticism provides a useful framework for analyzing the selected poems in terms of their environmental content and their potential impact as tools for promoting environmental awareness and sustainability. This theoretical approach, combined with postcolonial perspectives, allows for a nuanced understanding of how Nigerian poetry reflects and critiques the environmental challenges facing the country, advocating for a more sustainable future.

Methodology

This study employs a **textual analysis** approach to examine selected poems from

Tanure Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan* (2007) and Idris Amali's *Efeega War of Ants* (2014). Textual analysis is suitable for this research because it allows a close reading of the poems to identify and interpret their underlying environmental themes, imagery, and symbolism. This method focuses on how language, structure, and literary devices are used by the poets to convey their concerns about environmental degradation and sustainability.

To ensure a comprehensive analysis, this study focuses on a selection of poems from each collection that prominently feature ecological themes. In Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan*, poems that address environmental destruction, deforestation, and the consequences of human exploitation of natural resources are examined. Similarly, in Amali's *Efeega War of Ants*, poems that use allegory and metaphor to depict environmental conflict and ecological imbalance are analyzed. These poems were chosen based on their direct engagement with themes of environmental degradation, sustainability, and ecological justice, aligning with the objectives of the study.

The analysis of the poems is framed by **eco-criticism**, a theoretical approach that examines the relationship between literature and the physical environment. This framework is appropriate for understanding how poetry can serve as a platform for environmental advocacy. Through eco-criticism, this study investigates how the selected poets use imagery, metaphor,

personification, and other literary devices to articulate environmental issues. The approach also considers the socio-political and cultural contexts of the poems, particularly in how they reflect the environmental realities of Nigeria.

The textual analysis process is divided into three steps:

a) **Identifying Environmental Themes:**

The first step involves reading the selected poems to identify recurring environmental themes, such as deforestation, climate change, pollution, and human-environment interaction. This process helps to understand the poets' perspectives on Nigeria's ecological crises.

b) **Analyzing Poetic Techniques:** The second step focuses on the poetic techniques used by Ojaide and Amali to convey environmental messages. This includes analyzing the use of imagery, metaphors, symbolism, and structure, which help to emphasize the poets' critiques of environmental degradation.

c) **Contextualizing the Poetic Message/Themes:** The final step involves situating the poems within the larger socio-political and cultural context of Nigeria. This allows for a deeper understanding of how the poems reflect the environmental issues affecting the country and how the poets advocate for sustainability and environmental justice.

This study focuses exclusively on poems from two poetry collections, which may not represent the full range of environmental themes in contemporary Nigerian poetry. Furthermore, the analysis is limited to textual elements and does not incorporate other forms of media or public reception of the poems. However, this approach offers a focused examination of how two major Nigerian poets use poetry as a vehicle for environmental advocacy. Through this methodological approach, the study provides insights into the prospects of Nigerian poetry in promoting environmental sustainability, using *The Tale of the Harmattan* and *Efeega War of Ants* as key case studies.

Analysis Of Data

The data analyzed are selected poems from Tanure Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan* and Idris Amali's *Efeega War of Ants*. Out of the 27 poems in Ojaide's poetry collection and it is divided into three parts 18 poems explicitly contain Ojaide's romance with nature while Amali's poetry collection with 59 poems is divided into 7 sections, 14 out of 52 poems demonstrate the influence of the environmental factors on the poems. The tone of the two poets as expressed in the two collections under study ranges from ecstasy for the freshness and aesthetics exuded by natural forces and man-made ecological disruptions and destructions as observed in their works. The 12 poems selected from the two collections are analyzed in this paper to examine their deployment of images and symbols to

achieve poetic vitality in their poignant lamentation over the state of decay in the Nigeria and landscape.

Environmental Decay In the Tale of the Hramattan

In this fifteen-poetry collection, Nigerian poet Tanure ojaide adepts the persona of a home boy griot returning from travels to be confronted by the devastation wrought by oil greed, politics and technology upon his beloved Niger Delta, its environment, civilization and people. It became a tragedy of corruption suffering and dispossession in sharp contrast to the eco-sensitive animism of his youth. In the poem “the goat song” (p.9) the poet commences his painful monologue by painting a picture of hopelessness due to uncompromising attitudes of those on the helm of our affairs as:

Those sitting on wealth are rickety groveling
On sand; globules of anguish their only share
And who cares if foreigners found deep
Under their bare feet divine gift of pools

And started to tap the earth's underbelly
For fuel to blaze brushes of progress (P.9)

The phrase “those sitting on wealth” clearly defines the major role of human activities and its adverse implication to the environment. The pool's is an image of hopelessness in the minds of the inhabitants. In the same poem, he further states that “All along the taste of water from wells exposed what kind gods held

underground for the people”. As another Nigerian poet Niyi Osundare laments about the nostalgic yearning of what he lost as he explains in the *Eye Of The Earth* (1986: pxii).

Waters are dying, forests are falling. A desert epidemic stalks a world where the rich and ruthless squander earth's wealth on the interventions of increasingly accomplished weapons of death, while millions of people perish daily from available hunger p.xii)

Ojaide writes many poems to express his pathos with the general human condition. *The Tale Of The Harmattan* vividly portrays the hopelessness, frustrations and human struggles within the oppressive system that has no tangible conservation policy to protect the environment from humanly induced calamities. The results are presented in a string of songs as “I sing the lands goat song”, “the last cry of its warriors”. Apart from the injury inflicted to the land, poet also expresses sadness over the neglect by the ministry of environment, whose creation by the civilian government has no meaning or sense.

The poem “priests converts and gods” (p.12) is a distress call over the harsh conditions of the poet person's environment in the Niger delta region as he says;

After school I looked out for the public park,
The community of plants and animals they promised

But they only felled more trees for
cemeteries, for bade burials

In homes to confine ghost to fenced lots and
make towns safe. (p.12)

The “fence” and “safe” in this stanza is basically for the safety of the ruling class and their allies for the rest’s plight that one is not an issue, they remain fenceless and exposed to all sorts of danger. In (p.13) in the same poem, he says.

In the south campfires of oil baron’s litter the landscape
Stoked all year round by humet – wearing graduates

Who consider themselves lucky paid foreign currency
Instead of the naira, an astute ploy to buy their loyalty (P.13)
The “Oilbarons” clearly brings to the reader’s mind the activities of both foreign indigenous oil thieves to support their operations ignorantly. The picture here is also that of exploitation of human and material resources which have taken the people so much time and resources to produce. In the poem, “Dots Within a Circle” (P.14) read.

1. Crocodile lose patience under sustained attack
2. Boats make bonfires for depressed fishermen poachers.
3. The lingua franca of green lost its alphabet to poachers
4. Cadavers and ailing captives – all that’s left of the record fleet
5. Rain is the heavenly Niger with open flood gates (p.14)

The evidence from the revelation becomes palpable and paints the vivid picture of

decaying rivers where the inhabitants survive the deplorable condition. The poet images of “rain” “boats” crocodile evidently concealed the harsh condition being experienced as a result of oil-exploration in the region. The angry nature has turned its back to the inhabitants of these rivers and the effects on them are natural calamities. Flooding, climate change desertification and cutting down trees are all as a result of the activities of humans. Throughout the poems, it is imperative to note that Ojaide has set out to achieve poetic vitality. It is a move from personal and local concerns to national, universal and human issues which show how grounded he is with historical memory. The language though highly sophisticated, is simple and reminiscent of the poets corpus. With a poem that addresses human issues such as “To the Janjaweed” (P.58) already nominated for a pushcart prize in the U.S., this collection is bound to win many laurels. With the publication of *The Tale of The Harmattan*, Ojaide has become part of kwela Books’ coterie of major authors singing Africa’s song from the local to the global.

Images of Environment in Idris Amali’s *Efeega: War of Ants*

To fully grasp the relevance of *Efeega: War of Ants*, it is necessary to consider Amali’s previous collections of poetry as a necessary step. Amali’s *Efeega* provides an intricate view of environmental problems, It might be recalled that prominent, Nigerian poets have drawn our attention to the ecological problems affecting the nation. In this collection, Amali reinforced his reputation as

a great poet whose diversity of topics and themes contravened the notion of art for art's sake – he mainly focuses his searchlight on environmental issues in the north – eastern part of Nigeria more especially on

The cows, camels, goats, sheep and
donkeys
In groups gather in brood
Under the huge neem canopies
At dawn.

Awaiting the eyes of the sun

The picture of environmental disaster is aesthetically weaved. The poet finally ends the poem with a piece of lamentation using the watchful eyes of the sun. In order to see things clearly, the poet also employs register from all works of life to point a vivid picture of what he is talking about. For instance, from military, economic, geography, medicine and so on.

“The wind decided” (P.23) is a poem announcing the coming of wind as another agent of distraction. This is responsible for unnecessary cutting of trees in the desert prone areas especially in Borno State Nigeria. In “Caging the Eagle” (P.70) hunters are equally causing a serious haoc to the animals. Both plant and animals are exposed to danger through human and natural calamities that are avoidable if the federal government is sensitive towards the plight of its people. For instances,

Because of the flight of the eagle
People of the earth,
Birds upon Birds of the sky
Have carried clumps upon clumps
And feathers upon feathers (P.70).

desert encroachment. The problem emanates from bad governance inherited from the military dictators. For instance in the poem “*The Eye of the Sun*”.

Through enveloping haze and dust
Of a dawn.

As the market days
Are not far in the horizon
Emerging with the sun (p.20)

From the above lines, the poem shows an open criticism to the government for neglecting its duty to protect the environment. The “Eagle” refers to the flying animals that are exposed to danger. With this ugly development, the entire climate is surrounded with crisis of existence. Constant repletion of this word clumps intensities the sense of grief and political instability that engulfed the entire nation.

To decipher the message of the poems, it is important to consider the form and content of the poems cited as a representation of facts from Amali's poetry. They can equally serve as the entry permit to his poetry's world. Whatever the case, his poetry collection *Efeega: War of Ant's* bring a new dawn or vista to a meaningful work to achieving a desired artistic goal. It is extremely useful in promoting environmental sustainability.

Challenges and Prospects of Nigerian Poetry in Promoting Environmental Sustainability

1. Challenges

Despite the potential for Nigerian poetry to promote environmental sustainability, several challenges hinder its impact:

a) Limited Readership and Accessibility:

One of the primary challenges facing Nigerian poetry is its limited readership. Poetry, especially literary works with complex themes like environmental sustainability, often appeals to a niche audience. The general public may not have the literary background or interest to engage with eco-critical poetry. Moreover, many poems that explore environmental themes remain confined to academic circles, thereby limiting their reach to the broader public (Okuyade, 2013). This is particularly problematic in rural areas where environmental degradation is most severe but access to literature is scarce.

b) Educational and Cultural Barriers:

The Nigerian education system does not always prioritize the teaching of literature, especially contemporary Nigerian poetry. As a result, young readers are often unfamiliar with modern works that tackle current issues such as environmental sustainability (Ushie, 2010). Furthermore, there is a cultural gap between the literary world and communities most affected by environmental degradation. Poets like Tanure Ojaide and Idris Amali address the critical issues of environmental degradation, but their works may not

resonate with local communities whose daily struggles with environmental challenges might demand more immediate, practical solutions.

c) Insufficient Institutional Support for Literary Engagement with Environmental Issues:

There is a lack of institutional support, both from the government and environmental organizations, for integrating literature into the broader environmental sustainability agenda. Although Nigerian poets have shown a strong engagement with ecological issues, their work is not widely included in environmental advocacy campaigns or government policies. This disconnect between literature and environmental policymaking reduces the potential influence of poetry as a tool for activism.

d) Economic Pressures and Priorities:

Nigeria, like many developing countries, faces significant economic challenges that often overshadow environmental concerns. For many Nigerians, the immediate needs of poverty alleviation and economic survival take precedence over environmental sustainability (Obi, 2010). In this context, poetry addressing long-term ecological issues may seem disconnected from the daily struggles of the population, making it difficult for such works to gain widespread attention or traction.

2. Prospects

Despite these challenges, Nigerian poetry holds great potential for promoting environmental sustainability through several avenues:

a) **Raising Awareness and Shaping Public Discourse:**

Poetry has the unique ability to distill complex issues into emotionally compelling and accessible narratives. The vivid imagery and symbolism in the works of poets like Ojaide and Amali can help personalize environmental issues, making them more relatable to diverse audiences (Ojaide, 2007; Amali, 2014). By focusing on the lived experiences of communities affected by environmental degradation, Nigerian poetry can foster empathy and awareness, encouraging readers to engage more deeply with ecological issues. Furthermore, poets have the potential to influence public discourse, shaping the way environmental sustainability is understood and discussed within Nigeria.

b) **Integration with Environmental Advocacy:**

There is a growing recognition of the need for interdisciplinary approaches to environmental advocacy. Nigerian poets can collaborate with environmental organizations, educators, and policymakers to integrate poetry into environmental campaigns and educational curricula. For instance, poetry could be used in

school programs to engage students with environmental themes in a creative and interactive way, fostering a sense of ecological responsibility from a young age (Buell, 2005). Furthermore, incorporating poetry into environmental campaigns could help communicate sustainability issues to wider audiences in an impactful and memorable manner.

c) **Leveraging Digital Platforms for Broader Reach:**

The advent of digital platforms offers Nigerian poets an opportunity to expand their reach beyond traditional print media. Social media, blogs, and online literary platforms allow poets to share their work with a global audience, thereby increasing the visibility of Nigerian eco-poetry. Digital poetry readings, podcasts, and video performances could also be effective tools for engaging audiences who may not typically read poetry (Trexler, 2015). By using technology to reach a broader audience, Nigerian poets can amplify their environmental messages and contribute to a larger global conversation on sustainability.

d) **Poetic Collaboration with Indigenous Knowledge Systems:**

Indigenous knowledge systems in Nigeria, which emphasize a deep connection between people and nature, offer a rich cultural resource for promoting environmental sustainability. Nigerian poets can draw on these traditions to craft works that

resonate with local audiences and reflect sustainable practices rooted in indigenous knowledge (Ushie, 2010). Such an approach could help bridge the gap between modern literary expression and traditional ecological practices, encouraging a broader appreciation for sustainable living within both rural and urban communities.

3. Potential for Global Influence

Nigerian poets, especially those who engage with global issues such as climate change, have the potential to influence international environmental discourse. The ecological challenges faced by Nigeria, such as deforestation and oil pollution, are shared by many countries in the Global South, making Nigerian eco-poetry relevant beyond national borders. By participating in global literary and environmental platforms, Nigerian poets can contribute African perspectives to the worldwide struggle for environmental sustainability, offering unique insights grounded in the realities of postcolonial environmental challenges (Buell, 2005). While Nigerian poetry faces several challenges in promoting environmental sustainability, including limited readership, cultural barriers, and insufficient institutional support, it remains a powerful tool for raising awareness and shaping public discourse. Through collaboration with environmental advocacy, leveraging digital platforms, and engaging with indigenous knowledge systems,

Nigerian poets can amplify their voices and contribute to both local and global conversations about sustainability. The works of poets like Ojaide and Amali exemplify the potential for literature to inspire action, making Nigerian poetry an essential element in the broader effort to achieve environmental justice and sustainability.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Having examined the relationship between contemporary Nigerian poetry and environmental sustainability, some pressing ecological problems in Nigeria it provided a prelude to develop into some of the interesting tying plant perspectives in the poetry scene. An excursion into the campus of the two contemporary Nigerian poets show that there are divergent themes relating to environmental protection which could be harnessed by the policy makers and educators in both formal and informal in raising the ecological consciousness of Nigerians. Recent literature in the developed nations is used extensively as one of the modern apparatus for promoting environmental awareness among the target audience. It is high time that we follow the same gesture for promoting environmental sustainability.

Some recommendations could be offered for future environmental activist firstly, it should be encouraged at formal education level in both primary and post primary schools. Teachers could integrate poetry in teaching environmental education which transient many subjects. Severally more

researchers need to be undertaken on how this perspective could be married into the main school curriculum. Thirdly, as this seemingly interesting subject has gained prominence among Nigeria literary scholars, it is imperative to the agencies responsible

for mass mobilization and cultural preservation to include these prominent Nigeria poets in all their engagements. With these gestures the issue of environmental sustenance will be well established in the minds of our people.

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