



## ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS AND ARTISTIC PROBATION IN SELECTED NIGERIAN POETRY

**Reuben Kehinde Akano<sup>i</sup>**

Department of Linguistics, African and European Languages,  
Kwara State University,  
Malete, Nigeria

### **Abstract:**

The implication/engagement of the theme of the environment by scholars in critical mode cannot be divorced from the many degradable pressures visited on it in different forms by man. The implication of the environment by humans in various ways has necessitated the continuous engagement of the theme by scholars of diverse fields. For obvious reasons, the environment harbours and nurtures man and as such tolerating its implication/ negative impact on it portends an unimaginable magnitude of danger for man and his generations. This paper examines the issues of the environment from the perspective of art. The focus is on the effects of pressure on the environment and its implication for the survival and corporate existence of the inhabitants. Poetic writings of Tanure Ojaide and Niyi Osundare shall be x-rayed as the grain of analysis. An ecocritical theory shall be adopted to guide and illuminate the analysis of the selected poetic collections. It is the findings of the study that artistic discourse on the environment is multifaceted and that poets of Nigerian extraction have been consistent in their engagement in this respect. It is recommended that the crusade for a safe environment should be continuously vigorous without neglecting poetic productions on the subject matter.

**Keywords:** environmental concerns, artistic probation, selected Nigerian poetry

### **1. Introduction**

Discourse on the environment will always attract diverse opinions from scholars from different disciplines. In other words, a robust and practical discourse on the environment should be interdisciplinary because of many reasons. On the other hand, the environment as an entity occupies a prominent position in the survival and corporate existence of man. In fact, it is endowment versus human. Aside from the environment, it is a man and nothing else! On the other hand, the environment predates and nurtures man. The survival of man – in terms of habitation, feeding, breathing, labour, and earning, depends

---

<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [omotwins@gmail.com](mailto:omotwins@gmail.com)

on a tidy and good environment. The environment remains an organic complex that defines the abode of man and the meaning of the earth. Musan Toyin et al. list the components of the environment as 'Health and Hygiene, Wildlife, Forests, Pollution, Population dynamics and environmental concerns, global warming and ozone depletion (1). Observe further that:

*“One major problem confronting mankind in recent times is on how to maintain a balance in the environment. The concern for the environment has risen because the negative consequences of man’s activities on earth are now becoming apparent. The earth offers a life support system to human beings and other organisms through a delicate balance of relationship and conditions between its elements of air, water and land”*

In general terms, environmental degradation is an act that is blamable to all segments of society, especially in third world countries like Nigeria. From the common shop owners, and abattoir workers to residents who dump refuse or trash indiscriminately on the waterways, undeveloped sites, open fields, gutters, streams, etc. There is an engagement in unfriendly environmental activities in one way or the other. Such activities, either consciously or unconsciously, often degrade the environment. What of indecorous defecation by people, unauthorised pillage of sand or digging, and erection of buildings that block waterways among others. It is either the environment is littered, polluted, degraded or eroded. Either way, such activities are not just unfriendly but that they amount to environmental degradation with severe implications for healthy living.

A more serious degradation occurs with companies that evacuate dung and tipper owners that pack loads of sand from the banks of the rivers. The consequence of such activities is an untold environmental hazard – erosion, pollution and epidemics. What about those who fell trees for commercial purposes without planting new ones. desertification, erosion, etc. often result from it.

From the perspective of art, the environment takes different forms with man at the centre of all manners of activities that are environmentally related. The art redefines the environment through delineation of its constituents; and codification of its symbolism. The literary artist has always been at the forefront of the crusade for a safe environment. In his enlightened and multi-dimensional approach, the artist’s dissection of man’s pressure on the environment has been holistic even as he identifies the bane and culprits of environmental depredation. Glen Love in his book *Practical Criticism* points out that there is a reading of literature with the freshness of sensitivity in decoding the emergent voice of nature and that literature represents the expression of both human and non-human creatures and landscapes (5). What obtains in environmental studies he concludes are that:

*“What is emerging is a multiplicity of approaches and subjects, including –under the big tent of environmental literature- nature writing, deep ecology of cities, eco-feminism, the literature of toxicity, environmental justice, bio-regionalism, the lives of animals, the*

*reevaluation of place, interdisciplinary eco-theory, the expansion of the canon to include previously unheard voices and the reinterpretation of canonical works from the past.*

It is in this category that Niyi Osundare and Tanure Ojaide fall. By merit of their poetic production, the duo doubles up as artist-activist, crusaders and environmentalists. What singles them out as outstanding environmentalists is the merit of their aesthetic discernible in their copious works on the environment and their radical posture towards preserving it.

The environment constitutes the earth and its constituents which are understood as arable land, the aquatics, the biosphere, the habitat, the forest, flora and fauna, among other nutrients. The artist's dissection takes into account all of these from the point of view of who relates to the earth, what manner of relationships and what impact or effect it produces on the overall habitation and nurture of man.

Literary treatise on the environment is all-encompassing as it interrogates the scientific and the unscientific; the animist and the mundane; the preservative and the pejorative; the edifying and the debilitating activities of humans. The artist weighs the social, the political, the economic, the communal, the narrow or myopic and the collective modes of relating to the environment. The ultimate and perhaps the uniqueness of the artistic inquiry into matters of the environment is its unpretentious critical and informed approach to it. The study exemplifies all of these in the exploration of the works of Niyi Osundare and Tanure Ojaide.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Poetry writing in Africa has reflected issues of governance in which poets and authors have been committed to the cause of nation-building. But how far can literature go, particularly poetry in influencing the attitude of the supposed leaders of African nation-states in their mode of leadership and governance? This paper probes into the efficacy of poetry writing of Niyi Osundare and Tanure Ojaide with a view to investigating how far the duo has been able to reflect the true realities of the socio-political well-being of Nigerians and Africans as a whole.

## **2. Eco-writings, Postcolonial Experience and Folk's Survival**

In terms of eco-biases in African literary writings, the continent has been up to the task by providing critical analysis and creative outbursts that capture or depict Africa's share of ecological calamities natural and mundane. A realistic discussion of ecology and postcolonial experience of folks on African soil and the chunk of literary writings expressing anger and vituperations bordering on ecocriticism cannot be divorced from critical as well as creative outbursts coming from literary minds that are of African descent. The discourse has always been historical with the label of 'look back' as scholars have ingeniously captured and interpreted the colonial intrusion and capitalist onslaught on African endowment. This has been recaptioned as historicist-materialist.

Post-colonial writings are now fraught with eco-eco-echoes and flavours as many scholars of African origin have taken up the challenge of ecological degradation in their unparalleled concern for the wellbeing of their people and the survival of humans all over the globe. The domestication of ecocritical tenets as a theoretical guide has been aggressively and ingeniously embraced by African scholars due to their emotional reaction to the unprecedented pressure on the environment and the attendant woes being experienced. The agents of pollution and deprivation have been capitalist agents and opportunistic political or military cabals laying siege on the socio-political gamut of governance. The continent has been blessed with the type of environment that was not only serene but rich and stable. The people of the Niger Delta among others like their counterparts in the East, West and North of Nigeria were in harmony with their environment since the time immemorial. Yes, there could be occasional drought, flooding and famine. The kind of volcanic plunder visited on the Niger Delta in the guise of oil exploration is unprecedented, strange and discomfiting. Now with the coming of oil exploration in the Niger Delta. The aftermath of which has been degrading and annihilating, there has been a serious attack in the name of literary sloganeering, polemics and activism. The vision and mission on ecological damage visited on the environment of the Niger Delta and others are what Sule Eja branded as 'literary militancy'. Sule identifies the three agents of environmental degradation as oil companies, Niger Delta militants and the corrupt political class which has since transformed from military misadventures into inept but corrupt political marauders at the helm of affairs of Nigeria. Oil exploration with its gargantuan ecological challenges seems to be on the front burner of eco-related writings and scholarship within the productive circle of Nigerian writers and critics. The interest in oil and all that is associated with it be it negative or positive could be a global concern because of what Sule Eja refers to as petrodollar nomenclature; the oil is an international product being traded in the global market and controlled by global competitors. Yet there are other environmental issues being experienced in postcolonial Nigeria and Africa. There have been civil wars occasioned by the desire to control the political space. Nigeria had its own bitter taste of civil war between 1967 and 1970, and the echoes of damage especially to human and material assets are still lauded. J. P Clark and Odi Ofeimu, no matter their contrasting puns and metaphors or parables capture the destructive essence of the wars in their poems casualties and 'another casualties' Niyi Osundare's treatment of the forest and its deforestation through mechanised exploration, tree felling by multinational timber merchants, chemical application and land confiscation attest to the many evils of ecological pressure often propelled by economic interest and pecuniary gains by individuals, companies and cabals. Thus on ecological or ecocriticism, one can surmise that the context and contest call for a multidimensional approach in line with the position of Simeon C. Estok (85). It is no more an argument just as Byron Caminero-Santangelo insists that "*ecocritical orthodoxy*" and western epistemology should take into cognizance African writers' eco-writings especially as it relates to history, environment and literature.

Thus, from Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, to Nnimo Basse, Remi Raji, Helon Habila, to mention a few (on the creative front), and Charles Bodunde, Okunoye, Abdul Rasheed Na' Allah, Sule Egeya, Okuyade and numerous others, the intellectual space of Nigeria and Africa is replete with fecund writings and critical postulations on ecology and shades of pressure on it. Eco-writing from the continent has come to represent a polemical wave of resistance and criticism of the unfriendly environment-related processes.

### 3. Environment, Poetry and Vision

The merit of the eco-vision embedded in the poetry of Niyi Osundare and Tanure Ojaide is accentuated by their commitment to the cause of humanity and the desire to make the planetary earth a comfortable haven for man. Regardless of the methodology and perspective, the ultimate treatise on the environment is tailored toward ameliorating the pain and stemming the devastation. All over the globe, the spate of ecology-related problems is relative and dissimilar in terms of nature, precipitation or cause and magnitude. The global nature of the environment cannot be overemphasised except that there are peculiarities of environmental problems and the regularity of occurrence. For instance, while the challenges of earthquakes, hurricanes or flooding are common in America, Europe and Asia, prevailing in the third world countries such as Nigeria are deforestation, pollution, mineral depletion, acute humidity, drought, and oil spillage among others. Osundare and Ojaide's poetic lines reflect environmental hazards on global and local levels but they focus more on continental experiences. The poets are conscious of the dependence of man on the environment in its physical and biospheric entities. They are also aware of the degraded status of the environment of Nigeria as may be occasioned by the nefarious activities of man. And expectedly, the visionary thrust of their poetry has been to expose not just the rampaging ecological menace but to identify illicit activities, the culprits or perpetrators on the environment and ultimately sensitise the citizenry/stakeholders on measures to stem the tide.

From his Wikipedia biographical sketch, Osundare's poetry is portrayed as full of images and its language fluid. He is very concerned with the fate of his continent and in quite a few poems refers back to the days preceding colonisation. They are the leading members of the group Funsho Aiyejina refers to as the 'Alter-Native tradition' (112). In his view, Tijan Sallah asserts that:

*"These poets have assumed the task of art for social advocacy in the hope of quickening the possibility of attainment of better world; without sacrificing the artistic integrity, they have emphasised their art of engineering purposeful social change. ... they are poets who have learned to employ the magical potency of language in order to radically alter the landscape of a complacent mind and inspire them to fashion a more humane future."*

On his part, Ojaide foregrounds the oil-rich Niger Delta region and its battered environment as the poet points to his scathing and revolutionary poetic serialisation of

the environmental challenges faced by Nigeria. As a poet of radical orientation, he blames the gargantuan pollution and desecration of the ecology of the Niger Delta on a mindless exploration of crude oil by multinational oil companies and the insensitivity of the political elite of Nigeria. Tanure Ojaide is from the Niger Delta of the South-South Zone of Nigeria. Being an Urhobo native, he grew up knowing what the Niger Delta environment was like before oil exploration and the environmental woes which seem to overwhelm the place at present.

Ojaide personifies the Niger Delta for some reasons. The Niger Delta is his birthplace, his nativity and his identity. His being rooted in the tradition, psychology and sociology of his place of birth becomes glaring in his poetic renditions. As a poet, he demonstrates his homeliness and maturation in the tradition that nurtured him to grow as an intellectual. His poetic lines are rich in borrowings from these people's folklore, myths, aphorisms and animism. In fact, his language of communication, though in English, the grammaticalness of his lines cannot be analysed without recourse to local idioms, proverbial saying, and anecdotes among other stylistic expressions which are Urhobo and Delta.

*"My childhood stretched  
One unbroken park teaming with life.  
In the forest green was  
the lingual franca  
With many dialects  
Everybody's favorite  
Water sparkled...I remember erhuwudjayorho  
Such a glamorous fish  
But denied growing big.  
Earth worm, communal name  
for the kind of women seeking  
to flourish in soft spots.  
Uwara, beauty that defies  
tyranny of Akpobrisi.  
forest manic and recluse-  
What flesh or fiber fails to capitulate  
before charms?" (Delta Blues and Home songs, p.12)*

As an environmentalist, he mourns the passing away of the old subsistence farming system that was the lot and practice of the Niger Delta peasants whose agrarian vocation and bucolic setting had given them away. Niger Delta is waterlogged but not without the natives exploring its values. The Niger Delta peasants are mostly farmers and fishermen who could survive through their farming profession. The forestry of the Delta is rich in Palm trees, bananas, rubber plantations as well as maize, yam, and millet among others. The poet laments the destruction of the agrarian mode and the annihilation of the farming activities of the people.

Oil exploration now takes over their land as it is explored in large quantities. That the proceeds from the commercial exploration are beyond the reach of the owners and native inhabitants of the oil-rich region is an unpalatable scenario. Ojaide captures the bitterness and complaints of the Deltans – Efik, Ibibio, Ijaw, Urhobo, among others.

*“Burrow pits of road builders, deluged into perennial  
Waterholes, provide respite from hard labour at home*

*But there no fish, no water spirits borne by currents;  
No Mamiwata and others to share the salt of life.*

*In these holes abandoned caterpillars and other monsters  
Stray down the summer without recourse to a treat.”* (A Tale of the Harmattan, 38)

On the other hand, the pollution and degradation of the Delta environment – arable, biosphere, water or aquatic, vegetation, habitat, farmland and courtyard is the worst consequence of the discovery and exploration of oil in the Delta Zone in commercial quantities by the Nigerian Government in collaboration with oil magnates from Europe and America.

The ecological hazards resulting from the mindless lifting of crude oil, oil spillage and an unkempt environment are unprecedented. Many natives have lost their lives while a quiet number have become sick due to hazardous flames inhaled from gas flaring and oil exploration.

*“Then came subsoil oil, no longer red but black,  
converted by entrepreneurs into capital fuel.*

*This oil bleeding from the earth flowers light  
and they sing hymns to fan its incandescence.*

*It is we who live in the dark that give out light.  
They make bonfires of our blind ancestors’ gifts*

*after hauling away priceless pools of abundance  
and leaving with us silent and roaming epidemics.”* (A Tale of the Harmattan, p.38)

The Niger Delta natives cannot but organise themselves and rise to speak against the crimes of crude oil explorers and the coordinating political elite in Khaki (army) uniform and the civilian’s garb. Unfortunately, the uprisings and protests by the natives have been met with bullets fired at legitimate protesters by the soldiers and anti-riot police squad on the orders of the Nigerian government over the years.

*"In the daily dearth of prospects staring at all  
mobile policemen brandish guns in the sun*

*and, from a safe distance above the ground,  
hired retired marines keep the pipelines safe." (A Tale of the Harmattan, p.38)*

One of such victims was Kenule Saro Wiwa, the eight Ogoni victims and a score of nameless natives sacrificed to the corrupt and merchandise manoeuvres of the political cabal and the licensed oil maverick operating in the Niger Delta. Ojaide mourns the Niger Delta martyrs who were silenced by the rampaging soldiers of the Nigerian government. To the political cabal and their foreign allies in the oil business in the Delta of Nigeria, Ojaide has a special refrain and dedicated lyrics for their exploitation and destructive activities in the region.

*"CNN & BBC embedded with Chevron and Shell  
Report that local women, stripping before cameras*

*To save their dying children and men, are primitive  
In their secure wings they knew not, Ogoni's agonies. (A Tale of the Harmattan, p.23)*

Ojaide maintains a radical stance in the aesthetics of his poetry. The poet's songs are laced with satire, invectives and imprecations which he heaps on the plunder agents that encamped against his people in the name of commercial exploitation of crude oil and gas flaring and subjecting them to all manners of hazards.

*"My closet of metal always  
Accumulates steel and stone  
there I cherish obligation  
with a thousand offerings  
salt to whet the bones  
oil to keep the night a glow  
not to be short of fight*

*I bear the weapon of the assaulted  
In the night  
keep the misery of the robbed  
In vaults of vengeance  
In my veins of course, tears of the wounded." (The Endless Song, p.4)*

In his approach, Niyi Osundare identifies the earth and its natural environments such as vegetation, farm yields and habitat as the symbol and constituents of the environment. In his rather romantic but pungent description of the earth, he singles out



the earth as the basement on which man dwells as a living soul in his temporary sojourn on the planet and that which accepts or harbours his corpse in his eternal journey.

*“Temporary basement  
and lasting roof*

*first clayey coyness and alluvial joy  
bread basket and compost bed*

*silence of the twilight sea  
echoes of the noon some tide*

*milk of mellowing moon  
fire of tropical hearth  
spouse of the roving sky  
virgin of a thousand offspring  
ogereeamokoyeri {mother earth}”*

He queries the reasonability and justification for the unguided ‘stepping on the eye of the earth’. The ‘eye of the earth’, Osundare recognizes as arable land, forest, and other material nutrients which abound in it. The illicit activities of man over the years are to pile pressure on the environment either as sawyers who fell trees in commercial quantity indiscriminately and without remembering to plant new ones or the ones called ‘modern’ farmers who plant and apply chemical and fertilizer which often deplete soil fertility after a few years as they embark on large scale planting.

*“The desert caller  
comes on a camel of clouds,  
undulates through the dunes  
of hazy shadows*

*&*

*Broadfaced like Kabuki mask*

*the westering sun*

*dips a bloodshot eye*

*in an evening lake.”* (Niyi Osundare, *The Eye of the Earth* p.23-25).

Osundare quarrels in his songs with the method of land acquisition and the deprivation of the peasants. Like Ojaide, he also reflects on the subsistence farming system that the peasants on agrarian cropping knew and which had sustained their generations before the incursion of the capitalist mode of farming that confiscates both the land and the soil fertility from the peasants. The poet’s fear is palpable and instructive here. The peasants in this part of the world have not only lost the means of livelihood but their pride and heritage. The capitalist sawyers and the planters ‘jumped’ into the forest

and bulldozed hectares of land for commercial farming under the cloak of Land Act Rights of the federal government of Nigeria. The Obasanjo Military Regime (1976 – 79) had through a decree put all land and everything that may have germinated on it as belonging to the government of Nigeria at all levels. Since the promulgation of the decree, the peasants have lost their ancestral claim to their land. And the government of Nigeria can 'wake' up one day to occupy any land for any purpose under the guise of the land decree.

*"I have heard  
the mud of sleepy boots plodded  
toil ward in dreamy dawns  
I have seen  
lives snuffed out like candles for the strain."*

And even in a tone resplendent of personification or pathetic fallacy, the poet enthuses

*"And the earth,  
the earth receives these green  
fruit with dusty tears  
the earth receives them." (Niyi Osundare, The Eye of the Earth p.46 – 47)*

To their marauders, Osundare warns in his passionate refrain on the danger of plunder and depletion of the earth.

*"The earth is ours to plough and plant  
The hoe is her barber  
The dibble her dimple  
This earth is  
Ours to work not to be waste  
Ours to man not to maim  
This earth is ours to plough, not to plunder." (Niyi Osundare, The Eye of the Earth p.48-49)*

With unhidden hatred for the perpetrators of plunder of the earth, the poet's authorial voice carries bitterness and disdain in his description of the culprits. He labels the agents of mechanized farming as desert callers; 'hazy shadows'; 'westering sun whom he accuses of riding on camels of clouds'.

To drive home his message, Osundare who calls himself farmer born and peasant – bred observes that the environment was maintained by the natives who tilled it in the pre-industrial era. And that then his folks would relish the aroma of the forests, the delicious symmetry of 'akee apple colours and they were fascinated by the 'pendulum

promise of ripening pawpaw'. Then there was no moment of hunger as there were plenty of yields and cheap produce everywhere for the folks to buy and eat.

The farmers were up and doing and they needed not to go far to do their farming activities. The farming life then was communal and the romantic peasant farmers could not be separated from their plants which they tender and cuddle with joy.

*"Farmer – born and peasant – bred  
I have frolicked from farms to farms  
Sounded kicking tubers in the womb  
Of guiding earth  
And fondled the melon breasts  
ofsucculent ridges."* (Niyi Osundare, *The Eye of the Earth* p.43)

The poet's historical recourse to capturing the agrarian ethos of the peasant reminds one of the bucolic setting as well of the pre-industrial Africa. Then before the capitalist mode of farming, the poet sheds light on this recourse to the bucolic setting in his preface to the collection of *The Eye of the Earth*.

The poems in this collection are a journey into those times and beyond when the earth's head stood on its neck and a hand sprouted. If there is a passionate nostalgia to the rendering it in the legitimate flame of the inevitable fire often kindled when an embattled present makes a forward thrust difficult (surely not impossible) and looking back becomes one of the weapons against a living monster. But all this resides in the house of memory where doors open into the backyard of time, and windows bare their breast for the knowing shafts of coming suns. For in the intricate dialectics of human living, looking back is looking forward, the visionary artist is not only a 'rememberer', he is also a reminder. (ii)

The vision of Osundare as inherent in his poems is to remind us of how rich and resourceful, accommodating and serene our environment used to be before it came to this dangerous and sordid state as the capitalist mode of farming was visited on it. The poet, in reflection, takes us back to the bucolic past where farm crops need no fertilizer before yielding proportionately to the delight of farmers. The poet paints a graphic picture of what the agrarian method was like and the collective almost trade-by-barter arrangement of sorts. It was a green colour and plenty of yields in the pre-industrial farming exploits which the poet captures this way:

*"A green demise, perfumed memories  
a leafy longing lures my wonderer feet to this forest of a thousand wonders.  
A green demise for this petalled umbrella of simple star and compound sun."*

Nature then was at its best and in balance mode – rainfall in its season for the farm tendrils, sun for drying up ripe crops and the peasant farmers would enjoy their season of planting and harvesting with bountiful harvests greeting the labour. Then *"corn fields flourish with living water from...rocky arteries \fatten the tuber"* and the *"hoe does not scoop a*

*sterile clod' rather it used to be 'pyramid of brood \ whole unclosing eyes witness \ every stoke and every dot at Amoye" (Niyi Osundare, *The Eye of the Earth* p.15).*

Then at Okee Ubo Abusoro, distant would shame the lazy legs an oro tree hawks lofty fruit \ for the blue children of a hungry sky as "*pampered yams break leaps*".

Lamenting the erosion of soil fertility and heavy forest in different parts of Africa, Osundare says doomsday is here as that which harbours and nurtures man is being threatened on daily basis with unending pressure and without conscious effort to control the wantonness. It has been a journey, from harvest and yields to famine and hunger. In mournful dirge, the poet of laments the awry moment that has since crept into our earth.

*"Suddenly, so soberly,  
Suddenly, the sky is tree-high  
And the horizon dips into an inky grove  
Like a masquerade scribbling loric fear to the lives of festival streets." (Niyi Osundare, *The Eye of the Earth* p.3)*

Not done yet, the poets lament that the indiscriminate felling of trees for commercial gain such as Iroko, Ayunre, Oganwo, and palm trees have destroyed and eroded both the material and spiritual values of the trees and their replacement (afforestation) is neglected and poor. He listed food crops as corn, yams, groundnut, beans, geregede, otilipakale, aroso which harvests have depleted over the centuries. Unfortunately, for the continent, those who pillage the earth or deplete its resources make huge profits with which they build mansions of at Ikoyi reservation high brow areas for their maximum comfort.

The poets are equally unanimous in their quest for resolution as they fervently pray that the tide of ecological problems be tamed and the inhabitants relieved of the trauma in all ramifications. Osundare, in a rather incantatory mode hope for a quick recovery:

*"Behold these seeds planted so soon  
In the season before the rains  
Let them sprout in the month  
of daring struggle;  
let them bloom  
and kill the killer pests." (Niyi Osundare, *The Eye of the Earth* p.47)*

He sums up prophetically that:

*"Our earth will see again  
This earth will, OUR EARTH." (Niyi Osundare, *The Eye of the Earth* p.50- 51)*

Ojaide too has imprecations as he fires in all cylinders his poetic rickets:

*"May the fire you spread gleefully  
this way  
Scorch you and your family at the other end  
May your patrons in government corridors  
become dead vultures to the entire world  
May the horses you ride to sack villages  
throw you into vainglorious days  
May you be the victim of your blood thirst  
and wander without relief from paradise."* (Tanure Ojaide p.62).

The prayers and imprecations from the duo underline the radical thrust of their songs and by implication the signification of the critical mode of literature.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

### **About the Author**

Reuben Kehinde Akano teaches courses in literary studies in the Department of English, Linguistics and African Languages, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria. His research interest includes oral traditions, eco-criticism, creative writing and gender studies.

### **References**

- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester: Manchester UP. 2002.
- David Mazel, "American Literary Environmentalism as Domestic Orientalism" in *The Ecocriticism Reader*, ed. Cheryl Glatfelter and Harold Fromm. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996),137.
- Egya, Sule. "The pristine past, the plundered present: Nature as lost home in Tanure Ojaide's poetry". *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 1–15© The Author(s)2018Reprints and permissions: 0.1177/0021989418777852journals.sagepub.com/home/jcl
- Haworth, William, "Country Books, City Writers: America's Rural Literature". *National Rural Studies Committee Proceedings*. Flood River, ork,24-25 May, 1988;11-21.
- Ojaide, Tanure. *Delta Blues and Home Song*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd. 1997.
- Ojaide, Tanure. *The Endless Song*, Lagos: Malt house Press Ltd. 1989.
- Ojaide, Tanure. *The Tale of Harmattan*. South Africa: Kwela Books. 2015.
- Osundare, Niyi, *The Eye of the Earth*. Ibadan: Heinemann. 1986.
- Reuckert, William. "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism". In *The Ecocriticism Reader* ed. Cheryl Glatfelter and Harold Fromm. (Athens: university of Georgia Press, 1966), 105-123.

Slaymaker, William, *"Natural Connections; Unnatural Identities: Ecocriticism in the Black Atlantic"*, *Journal of the African Literature Association*, 1:2, 129-130, DOI: 10.1080/21674736.2007.11690051

Creative Commons licensing terms

Authors will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Applied Linguistics Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflict of interests, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated on the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).