



DEMYSTIFYING THE LABYRINTH OF THE DELTA: AN ECOLINGUISTIC APPRAISAL OF SELECTED POEMS OF TANURE OJAIDE

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Abstract

Ecological issues in the context of Niger-Delta, Nigeria have been approached mostly from the perspective of environmental degradation, and marginalisation in previous studies. However, in literary pieces, which are mostly the dominant objects of analysis in those studies, there are underlying linguistic imports, which are reflexive of the beauty of the literary discourses revolving around the Niger-Delta environment. It is based on this backdrop that this study sets out to examine selected poems of Tanure Ojaide from an ecolinguistic perspective. To achieve the aim of the study, five poems are selected purposively from Ojaide's *Songs of Myself* and analysed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data analysis. The data is also examined using the Eco-critical Discourse Analysis (EDA) approach. The findings from the study reveal the use of rhetorical devices to converge towards emphasising the beauty of the ecological characteristics of the physical environment. The use of imagery by the poet draws on readers' socio-cognitive instincts towards the appealing to their emotive senses. In conclusion, the use of the eco-linguistic approach to examine the poems has not only revealed the poet's intents but has also demystified the myth behind the ecosystem of the Niger Delta.

Key words: Ecology, Aesthetics, Niger-Delta, Poetry

A. INTRODUCTION

Ecological discourses surrounding the Niger-Delta in Nigeria, also regarded as the South-South zone based on the geopolitical divisions of the nation, has been a trending issue over the decades, most especially in relation to environmental pollution and degradation, the impacts of which is felt on the sustainability of the people, whose means of survival are basically farming and

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fishing. This trend generates into increase in the population of the urban dwellers as people seek other means of livelihood in the neighbouring cities such as Yenagoa, Warri, Benin and Port Harcourt (Udumukwu, 2019). Apart from this, a more profound effect of ecological devastation in the Niger Delta is felt on climate change which consequences include flooding and global warming, among other natural calamities.

Over the years, scholars and critics across different academic fields and disciplines as well as professional who specialise in the oil and gas, and other sectors of the Nigerian economy have contributed immensely to ecological discourses of this sort, most of which are tailored towards the preponderant theme identified above— Ecological destruction, as against its preservation. The image of the Niger Delta and its environs which these discourses create in the minds of people abroad is quite unpleasant as there are more impressive ecological characteristics of this social context. Using the vehicle of language, creative writers; poets, novelists and playwrights have in numerous ways portrayed the Niger-Delta environment in their various writings in a different light which is reflective of the aesthetics rather than negativities of the communities.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to carry out an ecolinguistic appraisal of selected poems of a poet from the studied context, Niger Delta, Nigeria— Tanure Ojaide in his poetry collection, “Songs of Myself” using the Eco-critical Discourse Analysis approach with the objective of reconstructing the social facts surrounding the existing discourses on the Niger Delta; and demystified the myth behind the ecosystem of the Niger Delta.

2.1 Eco-linguistics

Following Haugen’s seminal publication in 1972, great scholars like Fill (1998), Mühlhäusler (2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2003; Mühlhäusler & Fill, 2001; Mühlhäusler & Peace, 2006), Halliday (2001), and other prominent linguists researched the interrelation of language, ecology, and society, resulting in the what is now known as eco-linguistics as a new branch in linguistics. In fact, these scholars encouraged their peer linguists to challenge language in the context of society and ecology, as a response to the emerging threats of environmental destruction due to technological advancements in human societies. Since then, two major lines of research have been established within the eco-linguistic realm. First, the relationship between human communities and their surrounding environment (Nash, 2011). This line of research is also concerned with language extinction/ endangerment as a result of environmental destruction and the degradation of natural habitats of various fauna and flora species, which subsequently will affect human communities that profit from those resources and the survival of which is at risk. Second is the discourse analysis that discusses how languages (i.e. lexicon, grammar, and any forms of media) deal with environmental issues; how linguistic forms can raise awareness on and/or understate environmental issues. Halliday’s critical view on insufficiency of

English grammar with regard to mass/plural nouns (2001: 194) is the pioneering research of this second category.

Despite the notable amount of eco-linguistic researches since its emergence in the 1990s, it lacked an explicit definition which would clearly identify its position within the realm of linguistics. According Dash (2019), an unformed reader may be lost in the thought whether Ecolinguistics is the ecological study of language or a linguistic study of ecology --- or both. He further asserts that words or phrases that churn out of such an exercise may well facilitate a good understanding of Ecolinguistics: the ecology of language, language ecology, ecosophy, and several other terms derived from the mutations or combinations or in association with ‘ecology’ and ‘language’ (i.e., ecocide, linguicide, biodiversity, and a host of others. Perhaps Stibbe’s (2015) *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology, and the Stories We Live By*, is a turning point in the study of eco-linguistics. Since it gives a very clear picture of the links between language and environment, and the mission of eco-linguistics as a sub-field of linguistics which “explores the role of language in the life-sustaining interactions of humans, other species and the physical environment” (IEA, 2018). Stibbe (2015) has perfectly introduced eight forms that human’s relationship with his surrounding environment, or “stories” as he names them, can take. They are ideologies, frames, metaphors, evaluations, identities, convictions, erasures, and salience. In this very new tradition, no unique theory is prescribed and the researcher is free to choose the approach that best fits their subject matter with regard to the category of stories it belongs to. Regardless of the approach, the ultimate goal is the analysis of linguistic patterns in order to reveal the stories we live by (Stibbe, 2015). Afterwards, the story is assessed in terms of being destructive or constructive with regards to the environment. A destructive story should be abandoned, while a constructive one should be promoted.

Compared to the picture of eco-linguistics worldwide, whether the traditional or the new, the Nigerian linguistic community is not yet well acquainted with this field; during the last two decades, only few academic efforts have been published. The few Nigerian studies that can be named in this field are works of Remi Raji works, Niyi Osundare and Tnure Ojaide among others. Their publications are poetical and are based on their language communities as they live in different areas with different climate and geographic features.

2.2 Niger-Delta Discourse

Since the death of the foremost environmentalist and human right activist, Ken Saro Wiwa in November 1996, the attention of the entire universe has been more focused on the problems the Niger-Delta region in Nigeria is faced with. Added to this high level of social awareness are the ongoing multiple litigations against multinational oil companies in Nigeria in respect of environmental pollution of different kinds which has put lives of millions of people in danger. The most prominent of all is the global awareness and concerted efforts of notable bodies such as the United Nation (UN) and World Health Organisation (WHO) in

sensitizing the entire universe of the danger associated with the destruction natural ecosystem through human activities such as urbanisation and industrialization. It is often said that if the trend at which the destruction of ecosystem through global warming, environmental pollution, deforestation, etc. are not checkmated, we (humans) are all digging our graves.

Against the above backdrop, writers, particularly poets, have made the preservation of the ecosystem the utmost thematic concern of their literary engagement. It is therefore not surprising that most academic attempts during the last two decades have primarily focused on describing the influence of language on nature. Most popularly cited is Ojaide's works as he cries out loud to the whole world on the effect of urbanization on his environment. Studies that have been published in line with Ojaide's view of human's destructive activities on the environment include, but not limited to, Remi Raji, Niyi Osundare Christopher Okigbo. The works focused their attention on different environments, making the issue of nature degradation a national issue.

It is worthy of mentioning that, though all genres of literature are concerned with the preservation of the ecosystem, however, the amount of poetry seems to be at the forefront of this global issues. Consequently, the roles of poetry towards the sustainability of the ecosystem deserves more research attention.

Poetry in particular and literature in generally addresses societal issues as might be peculiar to different human communities. The sociological issues confronting human the Niger-Delta in Nigeria for instance constitutes the basic preoccupation of the literature of the region. In the world of Sule (2015) such literature, poem in particular which are often called poetry of protest are considered as poetry of cultural revolution aimed at calling the global attention to environmental degradation and social injustice affecting the people of the Niger-Delta, Nigeria. In his work titled "Nature and environmentalism of the poor: Eco-poetry from the Niger Delta region of Nigeria", Sule (2015) examines poems written by Niger Delta Poets and that are concerned about the plight of the Niger Delta region. Works of Gabriel Okara, Christian Otoboteker, Tanuje Ojaide, Ogaga Ofowodo, Ninimmo Basse, Ebi Yeibo, and others are examined. According to Sule, the thematic concerns of the selected poems are two: a celebration of flora and fauna of the region before the advent of exploration; and a combative engagement with institutional powers responsible the rich environment.

Inyang, U. E and Orhero, M. I. (2020) in "The Saro-Wiwa Motif in Niger Delta Poetry" examine the technical use of metaphors, and images that allude to Ken Saro-Wiwa in Tanure Ojaide's *Delta Blues* and Ibiwari Ikirikos's *Oily Tears of the Delta*. The study considers the influence, legacy and immortality of Saro-Wiwa to thematise ecological devastation, political persecution, Niger Delta Activism and minority politics.

In a related work, Misshoun, H. (2019) in “Environmental Activism and Poetry: Tanure Ojaide’s the Tale of the Harmattan” analysed the special deployment diction such as using harmattan as a sustain metaphor, the use of irony, making pun upon words, and poetics of repetition to ask whether there is hope in the struggle of the people of Niger Delta towards the environmental sustainability of their region. Other related and recent works on poetry and environmental sustainability of Niger Delta include Abba, Onyemachi (2020) titled “Weeping in the Face of Fortune: Eco-Alienation in the Niger Delta Ecopoetics; Ononye and Chilwa (2023) titled” There is still something positive about the Niger delta ecology” Metaphor and Ideology in the Niger delta poetic discourse; and Ohwawworhua (2022) titled “Ecological Injustice and Solidarity in the Poetry of Selected Niger-Delta Poets”.

As evident in the above-mentioned researches mainly on poetry and Niger Delta, there are avalanche of researches regarding the social and global challenge of environmental sustainability. This is not unconnected with the associated danger that looms large on the entire universe. In spite of these numerous researches, quite a lot are required to be done in sensitizing people about the danger of global warming and its associated negative consequences on humanities. In addition, there negligible amount of research on poetry and Niger Delta from the linguistic point of view. Put differently, only a fragment of researches adopts the method of interrogating literature (poetry) data with linguistic theory. For instance, none of the above reviewed works is linguistics based, none of them adopt Ecocritical Discourse Analysis Approach (ECDA) as the theoretical framework.

According to Finke (2001, p. 88), language forms a link between nature and culture; it is a living fossil between human nature and the cultural world. This conceptualization of language is clear indicative of the fact that both the components of the natural habitat of the people within a speech community as well as their culture, reflect in the people’s use of language. Hence, language reflects the connection between the people’s culture and the natural habitat. It is based on this notion that the conceptual framework for this study is an approach to ecolinguistics; the Eco-critical Discourse Analysis (EDA) approach.

2.3 Eco-critical Discourse Analysis (EDA)

Eco-critical Discourse Analysis (EDA) is one of the various approaches to ecological analysis of discourses such as Eco-systemic Linguistics (EL) (Couto, 2018) and Corpus-assisted Eco-critical Discourse Analysis (CEDA) (Alexander, 2009 & 2018; Poole, 2022, etc.). While the two other linguistic approaches, i.e. EL and CEDA, adopt the model approach to the analysis of the ecology of language, the scope of EDA transcends those of its model approach, Critical Discourse Analysis CDA, which examines power relations and ideologies in a society from the social and political standpoints. In Eco-critical Discourse Analysis, the principle of the Positive Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA) approach is applied to the evaluation of environmental discourses such that the

analysis of discourses is tilted towards the admiration for nature rather than social development. This is a move towards inspiration, not dejection (Stibbe, 2018) based on the assumption that the identification of the harmonious discourses towards the ecosystem and the natural environment is an ecologically conscious ways of dealing with the environment.

Aside from the scholars mentioned in the foregoing discussion, other scholars who adopt the Eco-critical approach to language study are Fill, Penz and Trampe (2002). According to these scholars, there are two approaches to Eco-critical Discourse Analysis. First is the analysis of ecological discourse, i.e., how language is used to discuss the ecosystem— a text-critical ecolinguistics; the second is the ecological analysis of discourse, which is a system-critical ecolinguistics (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014; Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001; Halliday, 1990).

The toolkits of the Eco-critical Discourse Analytical approach are mainly lexico-grammatical elements of agents, participants, and circumstances, including aspects of rhetoric, metaphor, and framing, evaluations and appraisal patterns, as well as the discrepancy between semantic vagueness, semantic underdifferentiation and misleading encoding. Euphemisms and pejorative terms also constitute the linguistic devices through which an eco-critical analysis can be carried out (Mühlhäusler 2003; Penz 2022; Schultz 2001).

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The data for the study constitute five poems of Tanure Ojaide purposively selected from his collection of poems— “Songs of My Self”. The selected poems under consideration are: *Can I still call from the River Nun?*, *For the wind that still blows*, *Much of the year wet*, *In the Omoja River*, *Only in his memory*. This study adopts both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches to data analysis. The conceptual framework for the study is the Eco-critical Discourse Analysis (EDA) Approach. Using the Eco-critical Discourse Analytical approach, the data will be analysed using the Positive Discourse Analysis (EPA) rather than dwelling on the negative dominant discourses in the chosen data for the study.

Apart from the methodological approach described above, literature and conceptual perspectives in relation to the notions of ecology, linguistics (ecolinguistics), poetry and the Niger-Delta are examined. These concepts are reviewed to take care of previous related researches on the role of language and literature with reference to the ecological concerns of the Niger-Delta region in Nigeria. Put differently, the preoccupation of the conceptual review is to examine the interface between language/literature on the one hand and the problem of ecosystem in the Niger-Delta with a view to establish the beautiful natural habitat that nature bequeathed to the region and how human activities such as urbanization and industrialization threaten the sustainability of the ecosystem.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data for the study were analysed in this section using the rhetorical tools, framing, and pejorative terms. The data are also analysed using three concepts of semantic orientation— semantic vagueness, semantic under-differentiation and misleading encoding.

a) Rhetorical Devices

The rhetorical elements that abound in the data include rhetorical question, metaphor, analogy, and personification.

i. Rhetorical Question

In *Can I still call from the River Nun?*, the poet adopts special an unconventional use of rhetorical question by indicating a question mark only in the title of the poem. This is against the expectation of question mark against the fourteen different but interrelated questions which the poem contains. While this can be said to be an invention, it appears the poet deliberately adopts this method not only to reduce the frequent pauses, and enhance the flow of the message being conveyed. It is also an attempt to be assertive on the belief system that the poet holds firmly onto. It is expected that at the end of questions such as:

Can I still call from the River Nun to the sea maids
lounging in the Atlantic to come to me for a party
can the endangered rook, mahogany and others
hold back the fire of the conglomerates and poachers

The absence of question mark at the end of the above examples is an example of deliberate omission to reinforce the assertiveness of the intended message. This is similar to the style the poet adopts in *Much of the year wet*, where the conventionally rhetorical question is deployed in declarative sense to foreground assertiveness of the intended message. As indicated below:

Should I choose to be fish in the next world,
would I survive in the methane-filled stream?

In the above examples, each of the two lines is expected to have question mark. However, the absence of it in the first line increases the flow, enhances its musical effect, and above all strengthened the love and admiration of the poet for the mudfish in particular, and the ecosystem of Niger Delta in general. The same thing is true of the following lines extracted from *Only in his memory*,

does he recover and walk a stranger to himself
that the homeland warrior recognizes his lost land.

the poet replicates the same declarative use of conventional rhetoric question. On the premised of the above illustrations and analyses, this paper maintains that the use of rhetorical question in declarative grammatical structure is a calculative

device to affirm the poet's belief system as well as underscoring his ideological disposition towards the environmental sustainability of Niger Delta region.

ii. Personification

In the poem *Can I still call from the River Nun*, the poet uses personification in excess as the poetic device runs through the lines of the poems. For instance, "sea maids" are given the attribute of 'partying', "the river bird" is ascribed the attribute of 'dancing', 'fire' is bestowed the capability "to assault", and so on. In *Much of the year wet*, personification is found in mud fish being associated with partying. In *the Omoja River*, personification abounds in murmuring water, leaves shadow dancing on water, cheerful river, and naked forest. In *Only in his memory*, the following are examples of personification:

the black anthill that wears the conical helmet
the oko bird escorting the current after first rain to the sea...
and walks the soil murmuring soothing chants to the soles.
witnesses the vast grove stripped of its divine garment

in the illustrations above, the black anthill is ascribed the attribute of wearing helmet, the oko bird serves as an escort, the soil murmurs while the vast grove is adorned with a garment. All these are attributes of human bestowed on "the residents of wetlands", which is the nomenclature used by the poet to represent the ecosystem of the Niger Delta. This specific poetic device is used to reflect the aesthetics of the Niger Delta environment. In addition, the instances of personification reinforce meaning through the creation a mental image in the minds of the readers.

iii. Metaphoric Expressions

Metaphors are excessively used by the poets. Across the selected poems, metaphors are embedded, including the entities (targets) being compared with the source descriptions that are depicted through the poet's linguistic choices. Examples are cited across the poems as follows:

For the wind that still blows

*for the night that still falls
And the respite of its refuge*

*for the rain that still pours
and the green it engenders*

*for the seasons that still follow one another
and the regularity they provide*

*for the water that still flows
and the promise of entering the sea*

*for the sun that still rises
and the brilliance that sets in*

Only in his memory

*Only in his memory
thrive the affluent residents of the wetlands:
the black anthill that wears the conical helmet
the oko bird escorting the current after first rain to the sea*

*Only in his memory
the exuberance of his irrecoverable youth
where he still hugs green-garmented herbs
kisses the beauties that converge on the rain-flushed land*

*Now he carries scars of burns
watches its companion afflicted with toxic fumes
and the rest no mirror of his youth.*

In the poem, *For the night that still blows*, **night, rain, season, sun, and water** are used by the poet metaphorically to achieve strong sense of comparison between the source and target domains. The use of metaphor in the selected poems as illustrated in the two poems is to enhance clearer understanding of the subject matter of the poems by the potential readers. Besides, the metaphors specifically heighten the poetic nature of selected poems, thereby justifying their literary essence.

b) Framing

In the context of the poems, the poet deploys different framing patterns which are indicative of the poet's state of mind, illustrating in most cases, his feeling of nostalgia. Framing patterns that characterize the poem include the use of mixed genres, semantic relations, etc. These framing tools are discussed as follows.

i. Mixed Genres

In the poem, *Much of the year wet*, the poet adopts a prosaic style for the expression of his flow of his thoughts. Hence, we can say that the poem is of mixed genres; it is a poem but the message is relayed in a narrative form.

*Much of the year wet, it lives a regular life
in royalty in the creeks, streams, and lakes;*

*the mudfish floats with a retinue of family
fins, and from its gesture must be partying.
Baits dropped by fisher fills the water but*

It averts hooks and nets, going for plankton.

*in the dry season often a castaway
In dusty creeks ensconced in mud,*

a living miracle of draught, it settles

Mixed genre is also characteristic of the poem, *In the Omoja River*. Illustrations abound as follows:

*In the Omoja River we washed body and tools,
as we cross from the farm after the day's task.*

*There too, young, we listened to murmuring water
before taking tracks into the forest to pick fruits;*

*the sun wriggled between leaves whose shadows
danced on water; a spectacle of correspondence.*

*But they brought affliction to the cheerful river;
they brought flames of fear to the marvelous forest...*

The use of mixed genres by the poet is to achieve a stylistic effect, which is style variation.

ii. Semantic Relations

Apart from this, linguistic frames of semantic relations such as meronyms, usual and unusual collocation, contextual synonyms and antonyms are deployed by the poet to achieve clarity and create mental pictures in the minds of the readers. In the poetic excerpt, the meronym of natural habitats of marine fish and demersal are illustrated as:

Creeks, streams, and lakes

Likewise, the seasons of the year, the rainy, harmattan and dearth are related in the same manner as follows:

*Much of the year wet
In the dry season,
a living miracle of draught....*

Hook and net are used as usual **collocates**, while in line 8, *creeks and mud, year wet and rain*, are used synonymously. More illustrations of semantic relations, especially **hyponymy** and **antonymy** abound in lines 25-30.

*Singular fish a monarch metamorphosed
into, he possessed unfathomable power*

*he exercised over nobles and commoners.
The king of fish, none contests its primacy.*

The hyponym of communal relationship is represented in the poet's choice of *monarch* as the super-ordinate concept, while *nobles* and *commoners* are represented as the co-hyponyms. The lexical items, *king* and *monarch* are used as contextual synonyms. The use of semantic relations are means of creating words of strong lexical qualities by the poet, especially to emphasise the thematic preoccupations of the poems.

iii. Parallelism

In two of the selected poems; *Can I still call from the river Nun* and *For the wind that still blows*, the poet adopts parallelism. The following are examples:

*Can I still call from the River Nun to the sea maids
lounging in the Atlantic to come to me for a party*

*can the green leaves, grass and teeming undergrowth
shield themselves against the toxic flames of arsonists*

*can the air that sustains the living in this blessed portion
insulate itself against the vagabond flares of the raging gas*

The illustration above reveals the use of structural repetition which reflects the repetition of polar questions in thirteen stanzas to express the deep sense of nostalgia of the poet persona. The poet reflects on the beauty of the sea, the greenness of the leaves, and the purity of the air. The piling information through structural repetition increases awareness level of the readers as well as heightened their sense of suspense. The same structure is noted in the poem as illustrated below:

*For the wind that still blows
And the eyareya grass that dances*

*for the days that still dawns
and light that covers horizon to horizon*

*for the night that still falls
And the respite of its refuge*

*for the voices of day and night that still rings
and music to the ears*

*we love
and make love*

*we dream
and hope...*

These instances of parallelism in the poetic examples above are to heighten the semantic import of the intended meaning, increase the musical effect and create suspense as the readers look forward to information piling up, usually from simple to complex.

iv. Preponderant Use of Adjectives

Adjectives in the poem, *Can I still call from the River Nun?* is excessively used by the poet to create mental images in the minds of the readers. Instances of the use of adjective to achieve this purpose are presented as follows:

*can the **legendry** labyrinths of the Delta...*

*can the **endangered** rook, mahogany and others...*

*can the soil under assault from fires set by money mongers
find relief from its tormentors in **corporate** headquarters*

*can the rains, **God's lavish** droughts for **needy** folks,
escape the **black** clouds of **fumes** blanketing the sky*

The choice of **legendry** in the illustration above establishes the longevity of the institution of the Delta which constituted the childhood experience of the poet. A deprivation from which has resulted to the poet's feeling of nostalgia. The deprivation is so tensed as the general ecosystem of the Niger-Delta has been completely desecrated. The rock, among other physical features have been **endangered** as a result of these environmental disruptions. The choice of **corporate** emphasises the luxurious attributes of the living standard of the supposed oppressors of the Niger-Delta environment.

Foregrounded instances of adjectives also characterise the poem, *In the Omoja River*.

In the Omoja River we washed body and tools...

*...There too, young, we listened to **murmuring** water
before taking tracks into the forest to pick fruits;*

*But they brought affliction to the **cheerful** river...
they brought flames of fear to the **marvelous** forest....*

v. Analogy and Imagery

The poet employs analogy and imagery in the dissemination of his view points throughout the poem, *Can I still call from the River Nun?* Instances of analogy abound in the poem as the poet compare the powerlessness of several natural objects or phenomena such as "river bird", "legendary labyrinths", "rook",

“mahogany”, “porcupine”, “green lives”, “grass”, “air”, “soil”, and “rains”. The above natural habitants of the Niger Deltan Eco-system find themselves helpless in defending themselves against the raging environmental degradation through human activities. The threatened natural habitants of the eco-system are non-human, with some even non-living things; and this underscores their powerlessness and helplessness in the face of the threat which they are exposed to on a daily basis. This is directly comparable to the agony of the people of the Niger Delta who can do nothing to avert their worsening living condition as their environment is desecrated by the multinational oil companies in conjunction with the Nigerian government that priorities money rather than the living conditions of the Niger Delta people.

There is clear imagery of changing or transition of the environmental condition from a good, livable, friendly and healthy environmental atmosphere to a bad, inhabitable, hostile and risky one. A transition from natural eco-system through which rivers, fish, green lives, grass, air, soil and rains are projected as live sustaining natural phenomena, to a profit-driven oil exploration is depicted through analogy and imagery. Specifically, the word “poisoning”, “toxic flames”, “vagabond flares of arsonists”, “tormentor”, “black cloud”, “dark shade”, and “peril of dollar” are all indication of destruction and desecration of natural eco-system with its associated negative repercussion, particularly on the living condition of the people of the Niger Delta. Through a technical means of combining analogy with imagery by the poet, the readers have the mental representation of the two situations, as depicted by the poet, for better comprehension, evaluation and judgement. The motif of the poet is to enhance the readers’ understanding and evoke a sense of pity as he appeals to their emotional sense through analogy and imagery.

Stylistic analysis is always selective as all devices contained in a text may not be accounted for in a single study of this nature. In addition, where the same poetic devices are accounted for, there may be shades of differences in what they are used for, how they are understood and analysed. This study is not an exception to this generally held assumption. In this study, the poet uses rhetorical question, personification, metaphor, mixed genres, semantic relation, parallelism, preponderance of adjectives, analogy and imagery. All these are poetically connected to enhance understanding, create mental picture of phenomena discussed, create a sense of comparison, evoke a sense of pity, and generally; make the appeals of the poet as representing the view of the entire people of Niger Delta to globally significant. It is often said that much is communicated through poetry than all other genres of literature, and certainly the poet (Tanure Ojaide) has succeeded in proofing this point in the selected poems which constitute the data of this study.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Tanure Ojaide is an activist, an ideology, which is reflected in his style of writing. Despite the portrayal of the aesthetics of the ecosystem of the Niger Delta

in the selected songs under consideration in this study, the poet's ideology is clearly depicted in every line of the poem. The sense of nostalgia, reflecting the natural and beautiful ecosystem of Niger Delta, the peaceful environment devoid of crime and criminality which modernity has introduced to the world, the sense of oneness and togetherness through which people were raised in Niger Delta, and above all, the spirit of togetherness and sincerity of purpose through which the people speak with one voice seem to have evaporated to the thin air.

While some critical works on protest poetry, particularly in respect of Niger Delta are combative, confrontation and rebellious. Tanuje Ojaide, through the exploration of the selected works in this study, adopts a unique way of calling readers' attention to the beauty of Niger Delta in a bid to appeal for restoration of the lost beauty and glory of the environment. For every lover of natural habitat, for everyone concerned with environmental disasters such as global warming, biodiversity, air pollution, land tremor, deforestation, and others; Tanure Ojaide's efforts should not only be appreciated, but it should also be replicated in other genres of literature and non-literary works across disciplines. It is only when this battle is fought in multiple ways that humanities could have respite against a looming disaster that knows no colour, race, religion, ethnicity, or creed.

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