



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTAL STRUGGLES IN THE POETRY OF TANURE OJAIDE AND MARILYN DUMONT OF FIRST NATIONS (CANADA)

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ABSTRACT: *Earlier studies on the Niger Delta poetry of Nigeria and First Nations poetry of Canada have focused primarily on the environmental and minority concerns in the individual literature of these two regions. The environmental concerns in these two literary traditions are a result of the minority status of the regions with hegemonies depriving the indigenous people of control in the ways their landscapes and waterscapes are engaged. This present study takes these issues to a comparative level, investigating how the two marginal groups are reacting to the hegemonies that pushed them to the peripheries and the aesthetics the selected poets employ to combat local and global environmental changes in their collections. Tanure Ojaide's Niger Delta Blues and Other Poems, and Dumont Marilyn's The Pemmican Eaters are comparatively explored with the focus of exposing the similarities and differences in the portrayures of their environments. This study finds that the selected poets from both regions depict the primordial symbiotic relationship that existed between humans and non-humans in their environments, especially prior to the commencement of mineral resources exploitation in their regions. Poems from both regions compare the harmonious past with the disharmony of the present to raise global awareness of the problems caused by capitalist agents in the exploitation of the environment. Similarly, oral traditions are depicted as viable aesthetics which promote the harmonious human-environment relationship. The selected collections of poetry have political undertones and represent the people's collective aspirations, it is against this that they recreate the myths around their activists and heroes to document the history and raise environmental consciousness among the people. The poets of the two literary traditions compared, however, differ in the following areas: the poets of First Nations are more impressionistic in depicting environmental struggles while Niger Delta poets rely on metaphors and images to portray their environmental struggles. The study concludes that the environmental and minority struggles portrayed in the selected collections show the pursuit of environmental justice for their marginalised regions, and by extension, it is a contribution to the global environmental discourse.*

KEYWORDS: Environmental Struggles, Poetry, Niger Delta poetry of Nigeria, First Nations poetry of Canada



INTRODUCTION

Tom Burgis's *The Looting Machine* and Robert Kaplan's article in 1994 in the *Atlantic* titled: "The Coming Anarchy's" are instructive in understanding the history of European stewardship exploitation of the environment in the margins. Kaplan, on the one hand, and from a position that justifies European presence in Africa, argues that Africans are unable to give proper of their environment without the West's assistance. He adds that Africans are excessively "tribal" and innately given to corruption and violence (24). In other words, they would need assistance to be able to administer their territories, thereby justifying the exploitation of the African environment.

On the other hand, Burgis poignantly mentions those who are implicated in the exploitation of resources in the margins in *The Looting Machine*. He argues that the big extractive corporations whose headquarters are in New York, Beijing, Amsterdam, Paris and London are to be blamed for the exploitation and destruction of the environments where earth resources are extracted particularly in the margin. He mentions the Chinese state-owned corporations, BP, Total, and other Western oil companies that constitute themselves as giant trading houses of natural resources in the margin to fuel their economies.

These companies and institutions do not mind that those that lived in the spaces where minerals are being mined are affected by their activities. Over the years, they have also refined their operations and to paraphrase Tom's words: they have in "the place of the old empires are hidden networks of middlemen and potentates with state and co-operate powers. They have aligned themselves to the transnational elites that have flourished in the era of globalisation so as to serve their own enrichment" (9). However, from the Green Belt Movement of Kenya to the Narmada movement in India, to the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal, to Accion Ecologia in the Ecuadorian Amazon, to the First Nations in Canada, and the Niger Delta people in Nigeria, are indigenous people who have constituted themselves into oppositions in the margins, lending their voices to the issues raised in Burgis' article which is the exploitation of the environment in the margin.

In other words, these indigenous people are raising resistance against those forces both local and international that constitute pains to the sanctity of their environments. Activists particularly poet-activists at the margins have also been using their works to sue for ecojustice. They can no longer sit and watch their people struggle under the weight of imperialism, environmental pollution, deterritorialization and displacement. Hence, they have reinvented their works to contribute to the fight against environmental colonisation. This research, hence, engages Ojaide's *Delta Blues and Home Songs* and Dumont's *Pemmican Eaters* with the purpose of portraying how these two texts are reacting to environmental changes in their regions from a comparative point of few.

Conceptual Clarification

Oscar James Campbell in his 1926 work, attempts to delimit the very wide scope that over the years has been identified with comparative literature. He said that comparative literature ... endeavours, in the first place, to discover general laws which transcend any one literature, such as the development of types and forms under the progressive relationships of different pieces of literature and reveal relations of affinity within two or more pieces of literature. In the second place, it focuses on the similarities and differences through the comparison of literary traditions



across borders. In other words, comparative literature like scientific investigation studies literature by factoring the processes, and appraisals between or among literary works across different historical spaces, time, and bioregional frontiers. Oboke (1978) for instance, from a mythological point of view, compares Soyinka's "Abiku" and Clark's "Abiku" by comparing the manner the poets represent the Abiku phenomenon and thus contributing to a discourse on this mysterious African cultural beliefs. Finke (1998) explores Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* by comparing the linkages and the depth of the parody that Coetzee has done with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in the light of colonialism and with the counter text, *Foe*. Finke's critical work represents one of the many ways that comparative literature can be engaged. The critical discourse that intertextuality has provided over the years to a larger extent also gives a sense of comparative discourse. Olofinso in *Intertextuality and African Writers* critically examines works that have intertextual linkages: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, he said can be compared in terms of how both ambivalently engaged the African milieu. Similar engagement with the African milieu has elicited comparison also with Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*. Comparative works can also be done in the manner the authors explore the historical or postcolonial environments for instance postcolonial disillusionments can be comparatively discussed in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, *A Man of The People*, Armah's *Beautiful Ones are not yet Born*. This is because of the manner these writers express the pessimism of post-independent Africa. Naguib Mahfouz's *Children of Gebelwei* which makes use of traditional epic structure can also be compared with epics like J.P Clark's *Ozidi Saga* and John Milton's *Paradise lost*. Therefore, comparative literature offers limitless linkages and comparisons of textual materials and realities outside the texts/

Unlike literary studies, comparative literature does not just seek or produce aesthetic delight, but rather creates new models of understanding literary production across borders. René Wellek and Austin Warren delineate the scope of comparative literature to that which includes the specific procedures of literary studies--- comparison between works of literature – or even movements, figures and works etc. It, however, does not occlude studying literature in its totality, like "world literature," or "universal" literature.

From the foregoing and for purpose of this paper, comparative literature is that which compares one literature with another. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's (1999) definition of comparative literature constitutes a guidepost in this critical comparative discourse in the manner of factoring in marginal literature and various text types. The construction of the marginal identities of the Niger Delta region and First Nations elicit a comparative discourse of Ojaide's *Delta Blues and Home Songs* and Marilyn Dumont's *Pemmican Eaters*.

Theoretical Framework

Ecocriticism is adopted for this study because of the centralisation of environmental issues in this paper. Ecocriticism seeks to examine how metaphors of nature and land are used or abused. It is a broad area of literary scholarship which has elicited combative debates on how nature or the environment is and ought to be reflected in literature and literary criticism. Ecocriticism strives to make all kinds of environmental exploitation and discrimination visible in the world and in so doing helps make them obsolete (Graham and Tiffin 5). It promotes environmental justice in places where the people and the environment have been marginalised. Lawrence Buell's critical imagination of the environment is central to literary discourses that have emerged from ecocriticism. Buell articulates his concept of ecocriticism in *The Environmental*



Imagination: Thoreau, nature writing, and the formation of American culture (1995) and his waves of ecocriticism in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. He sets the waves of ecocriticism to create stability to the various notions of ecocriticism and his contributions to date helped in the exploration of literature and the environment. Rueckert, William's *Literature and Ecology*, Kerridge, Richard and Neil Sammells, eds. *Writing and the Environment Ecocriticism* are also important works on nature writing. The validity of using this theory is etched in the fact that the environment and the problems that both regions suffer are the abuse of their environments by capitalist interests.

A Brief on Niger Delta and First Nations of Canada

Niger Delta

The Niger Delta is one of the six geopolitical regions of Nigeria. It has a vast oil basin of some 70,000 sq. km. and a population of roughly 28 million. It possesses a massive oil infrastructure consisting of 606 fields, 5284 wells, 7, 000 kilometres of pipelines, ten export terminals, 275 flow stations, ten gas plants, four refineries and a massive liquefied natural gas (LNG) sector. (Watts 639). The Niger Delta's closeness to the Atlantic Ocean has made it reachable to foreigners and encouraged the region's trade with foreigners since the sixteenth century. It is seen as one of the most ecologically diverse places in the world and accommodates over forty ethnic groups, including the Ogonis, Ijaws, the Urhobos, and the Itsekiris. Fishing and farming are the basis of the traditional economy of the people. The activities are mainly for subsistence use and surplus produce is usually sold in the local markets or transported to bigger cities like Port Harcourt to maximise profit.

Although Christianity has filled the region, belief in traditional gods and the reverence of ancestors are still common. One of the most important deities for the Ijaw is Egbesu. It is considered to be the god of justice, which penalises injustice when invoked. The gods, the landscapes, flora and fauna, and the tradition of the people remain the primary sources from which the poets from that region draw inspiration, symbols, and metaphors for their environmental struggle.

First Nations

The territory called Canada has always been multicultural. "Even before settlers' colonisation, it was inhabited by a great number of distinct First Nations (Indians), who spoke about different mutually unintelligible languages that belonged to at least eleven different language families" (Lutz 52). The First Nations are made of people of Indian descent, the Inuits (formerly called Eskimo), who traditionally speak variations of the same language, which ranges from the North-easternmost, Siberia, all across Alaska and arctic Canada to Green land. There is also the Metis who came into being as a result of intermarriage between Europeans and First Nations women. There are other different ethnic groups with different ethnic names such as Montagnais, Ojibway, Cree, Sioux Okanagan and Nootka. (Lutz 52). These people have rich traditions that are tied to their relationship to the environment and their cultural practices accentuate their indebtedness to these traditions

From the foregoing, we can, therefore, say that First Nations constitute a multi-ethnic and multilingual indigenous group. According to Eigenbrod, Kakengenic and Fiddler: "Aboriginal, Indigenous, Native, and First Nation" can be used interchangeably (1). Several scholars have



also suggested that these descriptive epithets should be in a cap to indicate that reference is being made to a Nation or Nations.

Comparison

Ojaide and Dumont in their poems portray the indigenous people both in the developing countries of Nigeria and a developed Canada respectively. Their works describe the fight for environmental justice in their individual regions. The comparisons of the environmental issues portrayed in their works are explored below:

In “October 1869: to Smoke...” Dumont conjures the images relating to extraction practices that release toxins and other harmful chemicals that destroy the environment:

Boring mineral veins
Drilling wells
Forcing steam down bored holes
Extracting dark thick fluids
Stabbing the land belly
Sucking every seam
And filling the gaping holes with
The toxic unseen (20)

From the above lines, capitalist agents masqueraded as the Canadian Federal government were criticised as they bury the crime of destroying the earth by dumping toxins underneath the earth in Canada. “Stabbing” of the earth draws the visual image of their annihilating method of mining. Their approach reveals their scanty regard for environmental protection even in a so-called first world. A similar pattern of environmental destruction is depicted in Ojaide’s “Delta Blues” because the foreign oil explorers do not care if “barrels of alchemical draughts flow” on water (3), and the “barrels of oil” (28) destroy the environment of the Delta. The frightening impacts of human-induced destruction are portrayed thus:

My birds take flight to the sea,
the animals grope in the burning bush
head blindly to the hinterland
where the cow’s enthroned (22)

The above lines show the monumental impacts that the destruction has on the general landscape, flora and fauna. The destruction of the environment in both Canada and Nigeria is frighteningly portrayed by both poets as caused by capitalists’ invasion.

Both poets’ volumes of poetry portray their environments as connected, animated and alive. The humans and non-human lives of both environments are in harmony before the present disharmony occasioned by agents of capitalism represented in the texts. For instance, in the



opening lines of “When Green was the Lingua Franca”, Ojaide reminisces on that time in history when the ecology was untainted green and the natural vegetation communed with human habitats in childlike innocence. The diversity of the ecology of that region reveals communion. Such that:

Snails and koto lured him

The owe apple fell to me

...*ikere* froglets fell from the skies

That covered the land

Undergrowth kept as much

Alive as overgrowth, the delta

Alliance of big and small

Market of needs, arena

Of compensation for all (12-13)

The lines above metaphorically portray a balanced harmony of humans, fauna and flora as well as human dependency on the environment for food and survival. The local food economy thrived before the disharmony occasioned by the activities of oil companies in that region. The result of the disharmony is such that: /glamorous fish... refused to grow big/ because of the oil spills and their destructive impacts which alter the biosphere of that region. In the poem, the international oil conglomerates: Agip, Chevron, Shell, Texaco etc. were indicted for breaking the harmony that the environment once enjoyed. The metaphors that connote destruction such as victims of arson, restless soles, wiped, cut; beheaded (13) squarely describe the destruction that these companies brought to the Niger Delta people and their environment. The destruction is not far from the oil companies’ failure to follow international best practices in their exploration of oil. The impact of the destruction is seen in oil spills and other forms of pollution in the Niger Delta region.

A similar pattern of human connection with the environment is depicted in Dumont’s “Sky Berry and Water berry”. Here, the flowers are personified as her sister and brother to emphasise the unity of culture and nature. /Her sisters, the flowers/ her brothers, the berries/ (1-2) remind us of a similar relationship that resonated in Ojaide’s “When Green was the Lingua Franca” when: Snails and koto lured him/ the owe apple fell to me/. In “Not a Single Blade” also, Dumont romanticises the environment using personification. The lines: /No a single blade/ of grass on the prairie/ you do not know/ not a single blade/ will betray and/ reveal your whereabouts/ (1-6) suggest the reliability and emphasis of the bond that the environment has with the indigenous people is primordial and sealed. From the foregoing, both poets portray closeness and connection to the flora and fauna of the environment and so indicate that it was settlers’ colonialism that broke this harmony



Both poets depend on defiance and humour in depicting their resistance to the colonisation of their environment. In Ojaide's "I will save my enemies" defiance and humour are used to convey resistance against environmental terrorism in the Niger Delta. Lines such as: "I will not defile my scars and the memory of /marching daily to the gallows for a surprise end/inflicting shame on a defeated enemy" (12) depict the wiliness to be hanged like their environmental martyr, Ken Saro-wiwa, who was killed for daring to stand up for that region against the Nigerian military junta in 1993. Ojaide's "Dance of defiance" also deploys a metaphor associated with defiance to resist foreign oil interest in that region. He said:

I will still climb towards
the thin neck of the magic palm
to get my wine fresh from the top.....
Let me be the eyareya grass
shaken relentlessly by the winds
but will not fall in the frenzy.
Let me be that perennial river
that will continue to swagger in my course of torrents (69).

The lines above also remind us of the poet's indebtedness to the Udje poetry as a strategy of defiance to weigh down their oppressors. The perennial river mentioned is a symbol of Ken swaggering in the course of the torrents of exploiters in defiance. The use of natural elements to depict defiance and resistance is critically explored by Ojaide in that poem.

Similarly, Dumont's use of metaphors to portray defiance is to express resistance against settlers' colonisation of their environment. Dumont's "Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald" is a response to Sir John Macdonald, the First Prime Minister of Canada. He once described the First Nations as pemmican eaters in one of his many hate speeches against them. The poem is, therefore, a response in defiance to Sir Macdonald's altercation. Poetry for Dumont is used to challenge a lopsided historical overture. She defiantly responds thus:

Dear John: I'm still here
and halfbreed,
after all these years
you're dead, funny thing.
That railway you wanted so badly,
...
after all, that shuffling us around to suit the settlers. (9)

In other words, despite the name-calling and the effort to displace them, they are still resistant and will continue to speak against those issues that have confined them to the margins. The



allusion to Meech Lake (line 14) is to bring to remembrance an event in the early 1990s when the First Nations stood against parliamentary legislation that is supposed to deprive them of their indigenous rights as enshrined in the constitution. The resistance by civil society groups and First Nations prevented the law from being passed. Dumont thus appropriates real instances of struggle into her poetry to depict that First Nations are not savages or weak as often portrayed but are people that have stood against forces that pushed them to the fringe.

Both poets wrote tribute poems to celebrate their environmental activists. In *Delta Blues and Home Songs*, Ojaide, being from that region assumed the role of a poet-activist and mouthpiece of the region. That is, his poetic evocation is the representation of the collective thoughts and mindset of the people in their region. ‘Wail’ which is a tribute poem, Ojaide eulogizes Ken Saro-Wiwa, his friend through the reliance on Urhobo Udje dirge songs:

Another ANA meeting will be called
and singers will gather
I will look all over
And see a space
that can take more than a hundred
the elephant never hides
I ask the god of songs
whether all the singers will come (81).

The technique of rendering the traditional oral poetry of the Ijaw people called Udje to mourn the death of Ken is to raise consciousness among the locals. Udje usage within this context is to create organic memory of that event which would linger in the mind of the region. This approach is expected to rally the Ijaw nation, especially the Niger Delta people to be united after the killing of Ken. The poet chants: that when the meeting of the Association of the Nigerian Authors (ANA) is called, Ken is the elephant that would not be there. The elephant in some African folk tales is the king of animals of enormous strength. Therefore, Ken’s strength or activism in the pursuit of ecological harmony will be missed by all.

Also, in “Wail”. Ojaide uses lacrimation as a weapon to elicit compassion from those in power by searing their conscience over the death of Ken. The poet sings:

Streets echo with wails
A terrible thing has struck the land,
everyone is covered with shame and sorrow
this death exceeds other death.
They have murdered a favourite son
this news cannot be a hoax
for the love of terror
they have hanged a favourable son (“Delta blues”18).



From the above, the memory of Ken's death resonates among the people as they wailed over his death. The metaphors that connote violent killing like 'hanged' and "murdered" cut across the poem to signify the brutality of the military against a region. However, there is an attempt at the end of the poem that suggests that the activist (Ken) did not die, that he actually translated. The symbolism of translation is more pronounced with Ojaide's "Elegy for Nine Warriors" where the Ogoni nine are described as walking "back erect from the stake" (25) which suggests defiance and that the activism that Ken stood for is still alive with the people. From the foregoing, Ojaide has made a statement that the death of Ken did not put to an end the agitation in that region as the Nigerian Government has thought; it has rather fuelled it.

Dumont also explores tribute poetry in relation to what Ojaide did with Ken. Dumont's "Our Prince" explores the life of Louis Riel. The eulogy: /our prince, our prophet/ and it will manifest in the marking of places/ previously touched by you, Louis (26-27) expresses the monumental personality that he exemplified. The legendary Louis can be described as a visionary and should be celebrated. Also, Dumont portrays Gabriel Dumont in "Notre Freres" and "Li Bufallo" as an activist whose revolutionary approach to defending the earth can be emulated. He was also martyred (hanged) like Saro-Wiwa for advocating against the dispossession of their land by the European settlers in the 19th century. The use of buffalo as a metaphor for Dumont's steeliness in "Notre Freres", and the elephant as the metaphor for Ken in "Wail" points to an important point of convergence and how these poets pick faunal symbols from their immediate environment to celebrate their heroes. In "Wail" Ojaide says that: /the singers will never be complete/ without the elephant in their midst/ (81) to emphasise his importance in the Niger Delta. Ojaide, Ken and Riel risked their lives; even to the point of death to oppose state-sponsored violence against those at the margins.

In "October 1869: To smoke their Pipes and Sing their Songs", for instance, Riel is portrayed as thus:

Louis planted his beaded moccasin on the survey chain
 Cutting across Andre Nault's river lot
 Pitched there by men
 Slung with transits, levels and measuring sticks
 Men looking to the horizon
 Calculating the *free land* for homesteaders
 "you go no further" commanded
 Blocking their lines of sight
 Their ledger of lines (18)

In the first line the synecdoche: "beaded moccasin" exemplified Louis' resistance to the occupation of their land where he also stands as a defender of the earth. This is against the background of settlers' idea of *terra nullius* which sees the whole space of the land of Canada as that which is to be taken without considering that there are people that have lived with the environment for centuries. Dumont portrays Louis as a good mobilizer of women. He



positioned them in trenches to stand against those that wanted to take over their territory. The “Trenches, the lines of women and children,” (43) is one instance of the many attempts of the poet in documenting the history of activism of Louis. The lines:

Did the survey record in its calculation?

Witness whose lives were fragmented by their precise coordinates?

....

Could their instruments

Determine the number of years

Nault had lived and cleared brush

Harvested firewood on the same land he

Was now barred from. (19)

From above, the survey chains, nault (abbr. for nautical miles) and survey records are symbols of settlers’ deterritorialization. Those items are instruments of taking over native land. Dumont, hence, attempts to retell the history of activism in that environment with those instruments and the revolutionary vision of Gabriel against the territorial takeover of their land which is part of the struggle for environmental justice for the region.

As Dumont attempted to list the instruments that were used to take over the land, Ojaide, however, lists those that were immediately and remotely implicated in the destruction of humans and their environment. For instance, in “Army of Microbes” there is the image of “Hyena and his cavalry of hangmen that litter the landscape with mounds (13-14) to symbolise the Nigerian military. They are depicted as culpable at that time on Friday when Ken was killed. Ojaide repetitive evocation of the metaphor of the hangman, Friday and the “Nine” is to create a painful memory of the death of Ken and the impact it has on the collective psyches of the region.

In the “Army of microbes”, those that stood invariance to the activists are identified and they are the international oil conglomerates and the Nigerian government. They constitute a larger problem for the Niger Delta people and their environment. He metaphorically portrays them as a “usurper chieftain” with “rabid guard dogs” and deploys synecdoche to describe how they oppress the people of the region. The military closes “people’s mouth with trigger-ready hand” (4), has “creased faces” (14) and; they are ‘the insatiable microbes’ (7): that milk the region of his resources dry at the expense of those that produce it. He also uses metaphors such as: “Hyenas and his cavalry of hangmen” (13) and ‘the robbers’ (15) to describe the military. These are those that are responsible for the death of his friend, Ken Saro-Wiwa. There is also the reoccurring image of the executioner. The executioner is a metaphor for the military: /who maimed the land totem’s pet/ (18). The totem is a symbol that carries the very essence that Ken stood for. Ojaide later assumed the position of a poet-activist, as he decries the military leader and his soldiers whom he symbolised as a robber baron and his far-long accomplices (10).



Recalling this event serves as a memory and a positive spirit for the region to continue the struggle for environmental justice.

Many traditional African beliefs see the environment as animated or spirited. Chuka Albert argues that “a traditional African cares for his environment basically for the human good either to avoid punishment from the gods or for the future generation” (144). This ethical view connotes that nature has its respect which must be accorded lest man suffers for it. Therefore, the African man seeks to preserve his environment according to the traditional African system not just for himself but for the future generation and in honour of his ancestors. Similar traditional practices are found in the First Nations. These beliefs are expressed in Ojaide’s and Dumont’s works

In “My drum beats itself” Ojaide makes an invocation thus:

Inside the drum hides a spirit

that wants me to succeed beyond myself.

I foresee a thunderstorm breaking out in my head-

I wonder how I can contain the gift in lines

that I must chant to earn my griot’s name.

I bow to the master who never forgets my service

If I can wait and listen

Iyeiye

Brother and sister, if my ears will open wide

Iyeiye

If I will sleep awake every season

Iyeiye .(2x) (10 -11)

From above, drums and song aesthetics are harmoniously blended and interface with the spirit world through which we were told that the spirits urge the poet to abandon his personal call for a collective struggle. This is justified when the poet chants: “inside the drums hide a spirit” and “a thunderstorm breaking out in my head. In other words, the poet assumed the role of a mediator for the environment for the purpose of bringing the attention of the world to the environmental problems occasioned by human-induced destruction.

However, unlike Ojaide, Dumont appropriates dance aesthetics to depict their indigeneity and contest the narratives that relegated their environment to the background. In Marilyn Dumont’s “Fiddle Bids us”, the poet persona says:



Our Red River jig and step-dance will witness
 That we long kissed this earth with our feet
 Before the surveyors executed their dance
 Of lines and stakes at the corners to witness (29)

From the above lines, there is a reference to the jig and step-dance of the First Nations. A jig is a ritualised form of dance that involves leaping movements and step-dancing. From the poem, the propitiation of the earth is the mark of connection to the earth through a kiss as expressed in dance. She contrasts settlers' dance which is with their 'lines and stakes'. They, hence, executed their dance' which ironically suggests their territorial control of the capitalist enterprise. "We long kissed the earth with our feet" (line 8) further suggests that there is a history of the relationships between the earth and the natives which questions the whole settlers' idea of the environment as being a space where no human exists. At the end of the poem, the poet reiterates that they would continue to "fiddle, jig and bow/(and) when the fiddlers arrive, we'll vote with our feet?"(22-23) and the interpretation is that they will continue their land-based advocacy as a form of commitment to the land and project resistance in the face of European occupation. It is clear that Ojaide uses drums and songs as the connecting rod to the spirit world while Marilyn deploys dance and songs. There is a connection between both poets ritualising their oral literature as an instrument of protest and advocacy for the environment.

Both poets berate government institutions, for instance, Ojaide's "Hallucinations" portrays the perfidy with which institutions of government are run. Hallucination is an experience in which you see, hear, feel or smell something that does not exist because you are ill or have taken a drug. The title is sarcasm on government institutions in Nigeria that collaborate with the big oil multinational conglomerate operating in the region to rape the land of its resources. They must be sick or suffering from hallucinations. Ojaide derides them using metaphorical gabs like "the legendary hunter", and "the slayer" who "daily chokes the earth" (5). The fitting descriptions suggest that they have no sanctity for the people as well as the environment and this is not far from the truth that government presence has not significantly improved the conditions of the natives. More so, that government actions many times have shown that they are unmindful of the environment in the margins.

Similarly, In Dumont's "What We Don't Need" and "To A fair Country" condemn the settlers who constitute a large chunk of the Canadian government and how they use the institutions e.g. the media as an instrument of deception and occupation. In "To A fair Country" she queries:

I want to forget their ordinary ledgers
 Lists, records
 And deceptively even-handed calculations
 I want to forget the fraud and forgery
 Crooked schemers, connivers and collaborators (52-53)



The crooked, schemers, connivers and collaborators are metaphors for the big institutions and government agencies that took their land from them and turned the media against them through massive adverts and documentaries.

FINDINGS

The poems of Ojaide and Dumont compared meet in the area of romanticising the environment to depict the harmony that their environments once enjoyed before the infiltration of agents of disharmony. They employed paradox to contrast the seasons of harmony and disharmony through forms, and depict riveting imageries and symbols to contest their marginalised statuses. The season of harmony for the Niger Delta is before the discovery of oil and the season of disharmony is after the discovery of oil. Multinational oil corporations are primarily responsible for the destruction of the environment in the Delta.

However, the poets of the First Nations depict the season of harmony as the period before settlers' colonisation and the season of disharmony as the present settlers-colonisation that pushed them to the fringe. From the comparison, this study discovered that foreign interlopers are constant threats to both environments. They are there not for the interest of the indigenous people or the environment but for their selfish interests. These poets deploy oral aesthetics which is evident in the metaphors, images and symbols used to signify their struggle against the hegemonies that pushed them to the fringe. Ojaide and Marilyn attempt to document the legendary roles these activists played in their struggle against marginalisation. Another important meeting point of these poets is that poets like Ojaide and Marilyn Dumont are environmental activists who are actively involved in environmental justice advocacies in their regions. They are poet activists and are actively involved in environmental justice advocacies in their regions. These mindsets must have been the reasons for them wanting to narrate the history of their environment in poetry to create social awakening. Thus, narrating the history of their marginalisation and the martyrdom of their heroes are dominant in their poetry.

In conclusion, this comparative work has problematized environmental issues and the poets have shown that their regions are victims of different levels of environmental colourization. Ojaide's poems are tailored toward addressing these problems occasioned by the activities of the multinational oil interests in that region while Dumont centred her works on the colonisation of their environment as a result of the coming of the (white) settlers to Canada.

Both poets comparatively portray environmental pollutions which affect the quality of drinking water of the natives; displaces the people; separates them from the primordial site of connection with nature. They have used their poems as agencies of resistance to government and institutions that are working in variance to ecological harmony. The environments of the two bioregions convey meaning and saturate places with emotive attachments of natives to their environments as portrayed in the analysed poems



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