

# Decolonizing Ecological Knowledge and Ecofeminist Resistance in Tanure Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan* and Nnimmo Bassey's *We Thought it was Oil but it Was Blood*

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## Abstract

The Niger Delta environment is one of the worst oil polluted environment in the world with women and children being the worst victims of this pollution. The search for an indigenous ecological knowledge is among the greatest of all decolonial projects towards gender and ecological sustainability. Focusing on women and the environment, this paper engages the injustices of oil pollution in the textual Niger Delta region of Nigeria using Ecofeminist life interconnections and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) also known as Indigenous Ecological knowledge (IEK). Precolonial Africa is an organized ecologically prioritized society in which no part of the environment is neither neglected nor unruly exploited. Nevertheless, gender takes the modernist approach to exit the margin, as colonial intrusion and socio-political disillusionments dominate the postcolonial discourse with almost no reference to women and the environment in African literature. From Ecofeminism and Traditional Ecological Knowledge, our paper examines images of indigenous ecological knowledge and women resistance to oil pollution in Tanure Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan* and Nnimmo Bassey's *We Thought it was Oil, but it was Blood*". The Environment is further investigated as a detrimental space, a kind of contradiction foregrounded in the toxicity of the exploited environment and its implications on the Niger Delta women.

**Keywords:** *Ecopoetic, Indigenous Ecological Knowledge, Oil Pollution, Niger Delta and Ecofeminist Activism.*

## INTRODUCTION

Ecological knowledge was hinged on Western epistemics as if other indigenous ways of knowing were far from the environment that produces them (Agrawal,1995; Tsuji, and Ho, 2002). Although, Ernst Haeckel who coined the word ecology in 1866 establishes the ontology of the word in Greek *oikos*, which means home plus *logos* (Schwarz, and Jax, 2011), the precolonial Africa existed in ecologically prioritized society in which no part of the environment is neglected nor unruly exploited (Adekunle and Nwaechefu, 2019). The earth was held in an awe of motherhood, where human and non-human strife in her life-giving and substance (Abonyi, 2022). So, the need for an indigenous perspective to human ecological relationship becomes imperative for Africa and the rest of the world following global ecological threats and the coloniality or Eurocentric nature of scientific ecology. For the colonized, coloniality continues to degrade the environment just as patriarchal capitalism oppresses women and the poor. (Merchant, 1996; Mothaleni, et, al, 2020 and Kanu, 2021)). Kanu states that,

The naturalist and materialist worldviews, which are basically atheistic have been at the base of the mentality that drives the wheel of the degradation of the environment both in Africa and beyond. The naturalists hold a philosophical perspective that unspiritualizes the world as a response to laws of nature that have been designed to govern the structure and behavior of the natural universe. (p. ix).

Such Western theories are part of the colonial /Eurocentric ideologies that saw to the unruly exploitation of the earth especially the environment of the colonized. An example is the Niger Delta region of Nigeria which continues to face untended extraction of fossil fuels, crude oil and gas as depicted in the poems under study. “The implication of such mismanagement of natural resources includes the burning of forests in terrestrial ecosystem and the pollution of aquatic life (Kanu, p. x). These materialistic ideologies are indices of coloniality which marginalizes the poor especially women who depend completely on subsistent farming and fishing to raise their children and sustain themselves. To sustain the environment therefore there is need for a familiarity of knowledge and indigenous ecological knowledge for decolonial praxis.

Decoloniality is a process of reemerging, a conscious practice of delinking from coloniality and a reconnection to indigenous culture and identity (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). Yet in Nigerian literature, the image of the environment appeared as an extended Romanticism until the emergence of oil exploration and the eco-strangulation of the Niger Delta region which (Saro-Wiwa, 1995; Caminero-Santangelo, 2014; Egya, 2018.). Scholars’ attention was focused on the ravaging youth protests which were beclouded by socio-political crises and ownership struggles for resource control in the region. Literature of the Niger Delta people, therefore, is dominated by ecocritical interrogations of socio-political and economic marginalization of the people (Gomba, 2013; Iheka, 2018 and Mark, 2021). The politics surrounding oil in the region was further complicated in political and economic crises cum environmental activism in the days of Ken Saro Wiwa. For, while the region was engulfed by unending protests and militancy, attention was shifted from eco-disaster as implicated in Eurocentric media reports and coloniality of power for capitalist reasons (Iheka, 2018). This singular frame of mind complicated the situation as many would believe that the unending crisis is socio-economic oriented, attaching very less attention to the pollution of the Niger Delta environment itself. Amid all these, however, women and children remain the worst hit. Women loose fertility and children die in their numbers from starvation and ecological toxicity, while protesting youth face the military at gun point (Saro-Wiwa, 1995). Nevertheless, as traditional farmers and fishers, the women possess a depth of indigenous knowledge of the land. They understand that women and the environment are interconnected in life-giving and sustenance. They equally understand that the two are marginalized in patriarchal capitalism (Gaard, 1993; Gaard and Murphy, 1998)).

Decolonizing ecological knowledge is an epistemic departure from the ecological unfriendliness implicated in Western dualism that separate human from nature, man from woman. and designated humans to the colour of their skin (Shiva, 1989). However, to daunt the ongoing coloniality of knowledge including that of the ecology, indigenous knowledge and/or knowability must include the adoption of community-based measures such as traditional women protest for environmental sustainability (Kaya & Koitsiwe, 2016; Olaopa & Ayodele, 2022; Olaopa, 2025). Although, Olaopa & Ayodele studies engage sustainable development in Africa, their interest is on the application of indigenous knowledge to the development of Africa on a larger scale, including sustainable environment (p.3). A further development shows

the place of the environment as Olaopa (2025) dwells on the importance of a decolonized ecological knowledge and its convenience for the indigenous people (p. 2). Olaopa's objectives are highly inspired by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The goals are critical of women and the environment, especially, the fifth, sixth, thirteenth, fourteenth and the fifteenth goals as foregrounded in the objective of ecofeminist empowerment and environment of the poor (Abonyi, 2025).

To grapple with African indigenous knowledge system and environmental sustainability, this paper engages the image of the environment from a three-dimensional perspective. The first is the image of the environment in traditional African Knowledge, the second is the image of the postcolonial /polluted Niger Delta, while the last is the decolonial images as depicted in Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan* and Bassey's *We Thought it was Oil but it was Blood*". While our decolonial approach would focus on various images of indigenous ecological knowledge, attention is given to the relationship between women and their environment as demonstrated in the following line of a Zulu song: "I am river, I am mountain, I am land, I am sun, I am tree and I am Lake" (Tamale (2020, p.84). The song maintains that women and their environment are one, so that "African cosmos is metaphorically linked to a spider web and the least element cannot be touched without affecting the whole" (Tamale, 2020. p. 84-85). Using Gaard's integral and life interconnection this paper further interrogates the capitalist ideology that reduces the environment of the poor to mere exploitation. This investigates the inevitability of women marginalization and the eventual ecofeminist resistance encouraged by indigenous ecological knowledge that held Africa together before colonization. Our aim is to expand the critical capacities of feminism and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) as indigenous, not as an opposing and uncontradictory decolonial approach to eco-gender sustainability. This paper leverages on the theorization of indigenous knowledge system as foregrounded in Traditional Ecological Knowledge (Berkes, 2018). This is a decolonial approach towards to the interpretation of environmental images and women activism present in the selected poems.

### **Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK): A Theoretical Perspective**

In many postcolonial studies, including Niger Delta literature, TEK is understood as an embodiment of indigenous knowledge of human-nature relationship that emphasizes environmental sustainability in modernity and traditional narratives (Egya, 2018; Kanu, 2021; Ihemezie, et, al., 2023; Berkes, 2018 and Tamale, 2020).

Although TEK is traceable to the experience and knowledge of indigenous people over years of direct eco-human contact, Hardesty (1977, p. 291) opines that such knowledge was considered ethnoscientific until the earliest systemic study of TEK by anthropologists in the beginning of 1980s to the present (Berkes, 2018, p.1). TEK as Inglis (1993) would say

refers to the knowledge base acquired by indigenous and local peoples over many hundreds of years through a direct contact with the environment. It includes an intimate and detailed knowledge of plants, animals, and natural phenomena, the development and use of appropriate technologies for hunting, fishing, trapping, agriculture, and forestry, and a holistic knowledge, or "worldview" which parallels the scientific discipline of ecology (p.vi).

Yet, TEK poses a lot of definitional complexities as scholars draw from theoretical concepts around ecology, indigenous/traditional knowledge and the difficulties surrounding the morphological processes of a knowledge system which can be call indigenous and therefore traditional to a given people. In sum, TEK as applied to our decolonial investigation of the

images of the environment and women activism is a decolonial ecofeminist engagement towards environmental sustainability in the textual Niger Delta region. As an emerging critical tool, TEK is “a body of knowledge, practices, and ideas transmitted and (re)generated orally and non-verbally in diverse forms, from generation to generation” (Casi, et, al., 2021, p. 181). Casi and others maintain that various local communities have been able to contribute to science with their knowledge of specific places and socio-cultural realities. Such histories are rapidly changing because of human ecological relationship in what the scientific community refers to as climate change and global warming. This also offers a more encompassing and multidisciplinary approach to the complex and dynamic ecosystems that human is but a part. The inclusive approach of TEK improves human and their understanding of environmental situation such as oil exploration and environmental pollution and can better inform a people’s greater inclusion and eventually redefines human-ecological sustainability (p. 181).

In postcolonial African literature, environmental scholarship is anchored on the polluted earth using ecocriticism (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996) and ecological proximity (Iheka, 2018). An example is the oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria which, according to studies, is the worst oil polluted environment in the world (Egya, 2018; Iheka, 2018 and Onome, et al., 2020). Nevertheless, indigenous perspectives on the study of the environment show that the fall of African traditional culture has more detrimental effects on the environment and the interconnected life than the physical impact that ecocriticism explores (Ramutsindela, 2018; Casi, et,al. 2021; Abonyi, 2022; Temale, 2020 and IHEMEZIE, et, al. 2023). While the African environment according to Ramutsindela is taken to mean the totality of Africanness, a way of belonging that represents an individual’s space, signifying originality and identity (p. 102), other scholars from eco-feminist perspectives believe that the environment is an interconnection of all life (Gaard, 1993; Temale, 2020; Boateng, 2020 and Abonyi, 2022). Ecofeminism borrows from the general ecocritical concerns such as capitalist exploitation of the environment but with a major focus on women’s environmental relationship. TEK is evolving but it tends to be more liberal an approach, focusing on culture and the tradition that survived a people in a given environment before colonization and Eurocentric civilization. TEK draws a lot from African indigenous ecological knowledge which as Lalonde (1993) would put it explores the long-term generation and transmission of the knowledge of the local ecosystem which offers a unique historical perspective into indigenous ecological risk options that even inform scientific knowledge for policy development (p.55). None of these studies is an expansion of TEK towards indigenous women and environmental sustainability.

Traditional ecological knowledge and ecofeminist activism is under explored in both gender and postcolonial ecocriticism. Yet, in Africa, environmental bodies are gendered and deified, of which many are female. The images of land and water(s) are implicated in the people’s belief in spirituality and spiritual ecology (Taylor, 2005). Such indigenous knowledge emerges from human ecological interactions (processes) and the people’s ways of knowing and transmitting (poetic) which Berkes (2018) refers to as “knowing and information” (p. 8). Berkes further explained that “the distinction between the two is very important for analytical reason and to understand TEK properly” (p. 8). TEK as a way of knowing shows that it is a kind of continuum, a process handed from generation to generation just as Ojaide’s poetry is described as *uje* (song of his people) and is handed to the present generation in his modern poetry. Poems like “The goat Song”, “Lesson from grandma’s night-time school”, “Quatrain Suit”, “For my grandchild”, “Market day”, “At the Kaiama Bridge’ from Ojaide’s *The Tale of the Harmattan* and “When the earth bleeds”, “We have one earth”, “Oceanic march”, “Climate climax”, “Your laughter” from Basseyy’s *We thought it was Oil but it was Blood* are

full of indigenous ecofeminist imagery that decolonizes ecological knowledge of the Niger Delta region.

**Decolonizing the Narrative: Women and Ecological Knowledge in Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan* and Bassey's *We Thought it was Oil but it was Blood*.**

Prior to environmental studies and ecocritical literature, women studies in African literature emerged as a robust area of specialization. Though shaped by patriarchy and its epistemologies, especially in domains of power, sexuality, and gender roles, women studies, particularly feminism, started as a counter narrative space that positions women as agents of social change in different African cultures and traditions (Chukwuma 2003; Adichie 2015). The African woman is also portrayed as a postcolonial dependent, whose identity is dimmed with more complication than it was in the traditional Africa. As Chukwuma would put it, the exclusion of women in political matters is a form of coloniality and in a way, contradictory to indigenous African tradition (Chukwuma, p. 203). Feminism, therefore, re-theorizes gender and cultural estrangement even as those who identify with the feminist struggles are sometimes socially stigmatized and described as unhappy (Adichie p. 9).

On decolonizing the narrative, Ojaide's "Quatrain Suite" portrays the African woman beyond her human body to include the environment in her feminist sustainable capacities. The poem is a depiction of the Niger Delta environment which is presented in the image of a beauty queen lacerated beyond recognition. The poem recaptures the memories of a child whom, upon his return to his homeland, discovers that oil exploration has done so much harm to his home environment and he cries:

The map of my homeland has changed.

The cartographers blot out forests and rivers

Oil wells and flares dot the new landscape-

Now nobody recognizes the beauty queen's face (Verse, 5. Lines, 1-4).

This is an indigenous ecological perspective that metaphorizes the environment in female royalty before the discovery of oil and the eventual ecological damage. The persona opens the poem with some extended metaphor, recollecting that: "To have loved Mami Wata in her underwater palace of coral" (Verse, 1. Line, 1), is a demonstration of nothing but: "to have had trysts with the moon in her days of full glory// to have tasted one dish and never wished for another // and to have lived here when it was a different country" (Verse, 1. Lines, 2-4). While the voice describes his childhood experiences of swimming as falling in love with the water goddess *Mami Wata*, there is evidence that the moon is also a female who he has also romanticized in the image of the word "tryst," and living in the environment in those days is quite satisfactory and in comparable "to have tasted one dish and never wished for another" (Line, 3). One would observe that the water is the domain of a female being just as the sky which is presented in the image of the moon signifies a female body with the use of the pronoun "her".

Ojaide's depictions are not only original. They also continue to resonate with the voice of his homeland songs, and these songs are transmitted from generation to generation through tales and moonlight songs resonating with Africa at all time and places according to Ramutsindela, (2018). And while Ojaide draws attention to the motherhood of the earth and the interconnected nature of women and the environment, Bassey's poetic voice warns that the environment is home. Thus, man must be mindful of his ecological use. In Bassey's "We have

one earth”, the voice goes decolonial saying: “Now we seek to re-discover // Ourselves beneath departed mahoganies long snatched” (Stanza, 2. Line, 2-3). As a reconnection to one’s root, decoloniality helps one to identify with one’s original culture and knowledge and this is clear from the second line of the quotation above. “To re-discover ...ourselves beneath departed mahoganies long snatched” symbolizes a delinking from a colonial ecological knowledge and, as the voice continues:

We must be ready to face  
Taking a stand to keep apace  
Outside the rat race  
We have one earth; we are all in one place  
The South has come to the North  
And I have seen the East kiss the West. (Stanza 2, line 4-9)

Bassey’s decolonial voice chants ecological belonging and life interconnectedness for “we have one earth; we are all in one place” (line 7). If ecofeminism, however, addresses the African woman by tracing her identity from the root and revitalizing her position as inseparable from the environment, it follows that ecofeminism is at the best a decolonization of African ecological knowledge. To take the argument a bit further, Fanon (1967) believes that Africa as a people and a geographical space signifies home and home therefore must be protected. Fanon’s decolonial perspectives got implicated in ecofeminism as an all-inclusive theorization for the sustainability of human and non-humans. Fanon talked about the protection of the African home, and he calls on Africans including male and female to work towards the sustainability of her ecologically friendly home for men and women, plants and animals as one big family. This gender inclusive ideology is not just indigenous but quite decolonizing. As Fanon would ask:

What is the good of a fine position if it does not culminate in a family, in something that can be called home? African will never be happier in Europe than at home, for he is asked to live without the very substance of his affectivity. Cut off from his origins and cut off from his ends, he is a thing tossed into the great sound and fury, bowed beneath the law of inertia (p. 15).

Bassey’s persona decries his polluted Niger Delta in “Oceanic march” saying,  
This pile of dirt  
Heaps of death from  
The exhaust pipes of death  
Can’t I refuse  
The poison  
And douse the flares from the nozzles of evil  
This cocktail of an air I’m forced to breathe  
**Whose duty is it to mix**  
**And to fix**

**This death sentence****In our homes?**

(Lines 4-15. Emphasis, mine)

The last line resonates with Fanon's decoloniality as well as our indigenous theorization of the environment which is referred to home and family in traditional ecological knowledge. For Africans according to Fanon would never be happier outside home. No wonder the voice describes environmental pollution as death in our homes (Lines, 14-15). Environmental pollution therefore becomes a question of life and death in the region as can be seen in Ojaide's "We know why": "The grazing cow allows the egret //without challenge, to pick its back and hop // from hump to hind" (Stanza 15, Lines 1-3).

This is a demonstration of indifference and ecological negligence by the Nigeria Military Government which continues to send troops to the region in protection of oil companies while shooting the protesting youth at random. It was the height of corruption to trade environmental safety for economic benefits (oil and gas money).

Until the region turned the worst oil polluted environment in the world (Epstein and Selba; Saro-Wiwa, 1995 and Iheka, 2018), all youth movement was sabotaged and faced with cruelty by the Nigeria Military Government, until the the women ofvthe Niger Delta movement. A movement that foregrounds their indigenous protest for ecofeminist belonging and resistance as discussed below.

**Ecofeminist Resistance and Environmental Sustainability in Ojaide's *The Tale of the harmattan* and Bassey's *We Thought it was Oil but it was Blood*.**

If "ecology provides the knowledge needed to make decisions about environmental conservation and resource management" (Erik, 2023.p.1), conserving the environment of the colonized requires a decolonial knowledge of the environment as this paper entails. Erik maintains that "by understanding how the ecosystems function, we can work towards reducing our negative impact on the environment and restoring damaged ecosystems" (p.1). Thus, underscoring the urgency of indigenous or decolonial ecological knowledge. And by identifying the environment as first, an interconnection of all life, which shares with women in life giving and sustainability, it is again noteworthy to understand the position of women whose livelihood depends on their day to day interactions with the oil rich Niger Delta region.

Saro –Wiwa observes that women are the worst victims of oil pollution in the region. He reports that in one of the days oil explorers came into the community for oil extraction, the women obstructed their operations, put up persistence and demanded that their environment be made clean from saturated oil mess clogging the rivers and the soil and making life impossible for humans and non-humans in the environment. The soldiers protecting the oil lords opened fire on the helpless women; many were killed and others injured, "among them is Mrs. Karaleole Korgbara, a mother of five children who was shot in the left arm – that hand was subsequently amputated" (Saro-Wiwa, p. 156).

It is no wonder some lines from Bassey's "The United niger delta oil co" puts the region in an image suggestive of a capitalist warfront, saying; "Yes, since nature rejects a vacuum // We will suck crude from the belly of the earth // Yes, since nature rejects a vacuum // We will pump blood into the belly of the earth" (Stanza 5. Line, 1-3).

In this transaction of life and death, Ojaide's "The goat song" decries the inhuman approach to oil drilling in the region saying:

Is health not the greatest wealth? Ask the old  
what blessing exceeds the wealth of health  
Must you uncover the wrapped gifts of the gods  
If you have absolute faith in their benevolence?  
I sing the people's goat song  
They wear smiles over deep wounds (Stanza 2, Lines 7-12)

The subsequent stanzas embody the sorrow of fallen heroes whose bodies were consumed by oil flame, and the gods of the land would not forgive such humiliation against the indigenous people (stanza 3, Line 1-4). And while the wind laments that its fingers are burning out, the trees have been shaved of their coiffure, therefore, "The big family is dying out - irokos fall; game // leave in droves, and humans flee to hunger // Soon the whole landscape will be a cemetery (Stanza 3, Lines 15-17). Lines 3-5 draw images from traditional ecological knowledge beckoning on the gods of the land *Ozidi* and *Ogidigbo* to come to the protection of the environment for "The blackened stream is ancestral blood // tapped away by giant pipes into the ship".

The personification of the environment in the idea of the big family in line fifteen line of "The goat song" is a demonstration of affinity, belonging and human identification with the non-human: the land and water (s) and all living beings. This is pointing to Ramutsindela's view of the African environment where "the meanings of the environment are best discovered by linking environmental ideas and practices to specific contexts in time and space" (P.103). Ramutsindela believes this is achievable by paying attention to intervening processes of culture and infrastructure development that directly reconfigure human-environment interactions. And to determine the fortunes (natural resources) of national economies, the provision of services must be adequately considered, focusing on the health of the environment that produces them. Ramutsindela's observations implicates the Niger Delta experience in which the Nigerian Government and the multinational oil companies explore oil for economic profits without attention to the damage done to the environment of the oil-rich region and the inhabiting beings including women and children. The people see the dark substance as the ancestral blood, but the voice worries as the blood is being "tapped away by giant pipes into the ship" (Line, 16). There is no doubt that such ecological distress is of no consequence for the capitalists exploiting the environment of the colonized, but on decolonizing ecological knowledge, the indigenous people are confronted with ecological slow death (Caminero-Santangelo, 2014), and the personification of "the big family" which is encountered as "dying out" opens the mind to a subtlety of eco-extinction.

Decolonizing ecological knowledge and processes of interaction might also lead to the emergence of new environments and social identities as suggested by Ramutsindela. What is important is that the human mind is reconstituted to embrace an indigenous eco-friendly approach to environmental sustainability. As Ramutsindela would put it,

"Our understanding of the environment as a site of human interaction could be enhanced by appreciating the relational meanings of the term encapsulated in terminologies such as environmental security, environmental citizenship, and so on. These terminologies have gained

currency in scholarly discussions, policy formulations, and environmental activism” (Ramutsindela, p. 103).

Environmental security and citizenship according to Ramutsindela conceptualize viable identifiers for eco-human relationship as encapsulated in ecofeminist belonging and life interconnection (Abonyi, 2025). And having perceived African environment from the legacies of Eurocentric capitalism, the earth environment especially the region of the Niger Delta is faced with unruly exploitation and possible eco-extinction. The Western dualism that separates humans from nature only succeeded in introducing ecological crises that science is only able to address the symptoms and not the urgent issues created by mindless exploitation and destruction. The implication is that there might be need to go deeper than colonial ecological knowledge can offer (Sponsel 2014; and Tarusarira, 2017). This lack of depth is, as Kanu writes, “Attributed to the modern man’s defective worldview, which denies the transcendence, and secularizes his already instrumentalizes nature. This has engendered in the modern man the attitude of ill-exploitation and degradation of nature, leading to the present ecological crisis” (P. xii).

The breaking of oil pipelines and burning of oil field in the Niger Delta by some angry youth in protest for fair treatment is not ecological crises as many would argue. Instead, ecological crises is ill-exploitation and degradation of nature engendered by human capitalists as demonstrated in Bassey’s “When the earth bleeds”. The poem is a pathetic rendition of the oil producing Niger Delta with persistent voice that choruses: “*The oil only flows / when the earth bleeds*”. And for what causes the earth to bleed, the voice recounts:

A thousand explosions in the belly of the earth

Bleeding rigs, burning pipes

This oil flows

From the earth’s sickbed

Because

*The oil only flows*

*When the earth bleeds* (Stanza 2)

The voice goes on to narrate the people’s experience at several gatherings and deliberations in State conferences and village meetings to manage oil pollution yet “In Ogoniland we can’t breathe // Because// The oil only flows // When the earth bleeds” (Stanza 4). The following lines are equipped with questions accompanied by agitating answers to arouse the people to stand and unite and “With our fists // Let’s bandage the earth” (Stanza 5, lines 7-8). Again, in Bassey’s “We have one earth”, the voice resounds:

We seek to re-discover

Ourselves- dreamers, chanter, criers

Sealed beneath departed mahoganies long snatched!

We must be ready to face

Taking a stand to keep apace

Outside the rat race

We have one earth; we are all in one place

The south has come to the North  
And I have seen the East kiss the West (Stanza 2).

Such calls as one could read from the lines above are directed to both young and old, men and women as Fanon earlier proposed. Thus, environmental activists and activism abound but the one most revered, most appreciated and most environmentally conscious is the taboo anchored activism taken by the women of the Niger Delta as depicted in Ojaide's "For my grandchild". In what sounds like a dramatic motif, the voice takes a list of painful and depressing experiences and challenges that confront the people of the region on account of oil drilling in their land. The opening of the poem announces ecological sustainability in no terms than human sustainability in an interconnected life, instigating a dramatic mode of ecofeminist resistance as the voice laments: "My children have had no scholarship" (Line, 1), but the greatest worry is that "They can't fish or tap rubber as I once did // the river transform into a snake of tomb // and the forest fraught with flares and fumes" (Lines, 2-3). These lines are thought-provoking and fear-stricken. In the face of hopelessness and obvious existential threats, women, mostly, menopausal in age took to nude protest in broad daylight as:

Villages of imploring eyes marching, hands up  
Raised with green-leafed branches, mowed down.  
CNN & BBC embedded with Chevron and Shell  
Report that local women, stripped before cameras  
To save their dying children and men are primitive  
In their secure wings they know not Ogoni's agonies  
With my grandchild born, the new Stone Age  
Of nations very black in the books has begun (Lines, 15-22)

Reporting in the interest of oil the multinational companies and the Government of Nigeria, the media houses call the stripping women primitive (Line 5). But unknown to them is the fact that the ecofeminist movement is traditionally the most uncommon and revered mode of protest in the region. Africa's reverence to motherhood considers her nudeness sacrilegious which is usually tragic and calamitous to whoever incurred the wrath of such women. It is therefore an ecofeminist movement, quite indigenous to the people. Yet, African culture continues to be seen from a colonial gaze as though it is lacking in environmental ethics and sustainability. Africa preserved forests and called them sacred groves, "some of which are currently designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and as important areas for biodiversity conservation. In its crude form, environmental racism has led to racialized ownership of and access to natural resources in much of the developing world" (Ramutsindela, (P.107).

## CONCLUSION

In her preserved forests and in harmony with all beings, Africa enjoyed a healthy ecosystem until colonial invasion and Eurocentrism, a civilization that reduced Africans to ecological ignorance, poor knowledge of science, nature, and natural resources. Environments like the Niger Delta become an economic dish served at the detriment of the inhabitants especially women who completely depend on farming and fishing to take care of their children. It is, therefore, timely to decolonize approaches to ecological knowledge, to return to

indigenous poetics and epistemologies as this paper concludes. The poems are clear imaginative productions of environmental-coloniality, unravelling the atrocities of ecological violence by giving voice to the voiceless such as the environment itself. The poems depict ecofeminist images of uncommon resistance that places women at the level of the victimized environment, both of which have been exploited, damaged, and degraded for too long. The movement is a symbolic mode of culture and tradition, signifying ecological belonging and life interconnection in Africa and among indigenous Niger Delta people.

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