A Critical Perspective on the Image of the Environment in Tanure Ojaide’s

*The Tales of The Harmattan*

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Abstract

A lot of controversy has arisen concerning the handling of environment by African writers. While the debate continues on what paradigm is acceptable to African writers and critics of so-called environment, land or nature writings, and whether or not to adopt western originated ecocriticism as a model for African environment conscious literature, since such literature is accused of being too anthropocentric by Eurocentric critics, this essay aims to analyze the image of environment so as to determine the African understanding of environment and demonstrate the appropriateness of the treatment of environment in African literature using selected poems of a renowned Nigerian eco-poet Tanure Ojaide. The essay investigates Ojaide’s representation of the African environment as Mother, Deity and Friend. The essay will take an Afrocentric approach to its analysis and conclusion. It will adopt and apply the aspects of ecocriticism that is suitable to the African perception of environment however, discarding the elements of the theory that may not sit well with African literature. This paper perceives “environment” to mean nature, natural environment, non-human environment or land.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Afrocentric, Eurocentric, Anthropocentric, Environment
Introduction

There has been no better time for studies on environment as the 21st century froth with myriads of environmental catastrophes that continue to threaten the existence of every life form on Earth. Research shows that global climate change threatens far more reaching catastrophic consequences than has already been witnessed. For Africans, whose subsistence is steeped in the environment, the devastation of environment is a fierce blow. Granted that the African climate is fairly stable compared to some western countries that witness hurricanes, floods, wild fires, tornadoes, and other disasters (on account of climate change), yet, one cannot deny that the wrath of wounded mother earth has befallen African as well, with some parts of Africa suffering life-threatening drought, crop failure and forced migration. In Nigeria however, the focus of environmental discourse has for a long time on the Niger Delta. Many writers and critics have dedicated their cause to being the voice of the region. Among them are: Tanure Ojaide, J.P. Clerck-Bekederemo, Onookome Okome, Kenule Saro-Wiwa, Ogaga Ifowodo, Kaine Agary, Gabriel Okara, Odia Ofeimum, Ebi Yeibo, Joe Ushie, and Chinyere Nwahunanya.

The Niger Delta has been bruised and battered to say the least. While this essay recognizes the many factors and dimensions of the tragedy of the region, the paper will focus on the representation of the crude-oil-devastated Niger Delta environment. The region suffers the devastating impact of environmental degradation. Tanure Ojaide, a militant poet, well known for his devotion to the Niger Delta; his home. He evokes in his writings the sufferings of the Niger Delta land, culture, religion, tradition, and people. The process of crude-oil drilling in a coastal region like the Niger Delta has brought about terrible and perhaps irreversible consequences for the Niger Delta environment. Some of the degradations include deforestation, contamination of farm land and water by crude oil, and gas flaring. In his paper “Jungle and Oil Green: Currents of Environmental Discourse in Four Upland Niger Delta Narratives” Chris Onyema describes the Niger Delta predicament:

> The experiences the oil producing communities undergo in the hands of the oil exploring companies, the conniving Nigerian government and their local leaders are so awful that the blessings of oil turn into curses. Their rivers are polluted; their farms are destroyed, just as their lands are taken by force without (adequate) compensation (204).

Like Onyema, many writers and critics share the opinion that the Niger Delta is a blighted land that has witnessed long years of injustice, oppression and neglect. Chinyere Nwahunanya stresses that “In the fifty or so odd years of oil prospecting and exploration in the Niger Delta, the human population and the flora and fauna indigenous to the region have been the direct recipients and victims of the negative consequences of oil extraction (From Boom…37). Consequently, this paper “A Critical Perspective on The Image of Environment in Tanure Ojaide’s The Tale of the Harmattan” seeks to examine the various representations of environment in the collection of poems entitled The Tale of the Harmattan, to establish the validity of Africa’s oneness with her environment as demonstrated in African literature.
Ecocriticism

The western origin of Ecocriticism is undisputable. However, what is still experiencing a flux of debate is whether or not the theory can serve the needs of African literature. An entry in The Nineteen-Century Literature states that:

Ecocriticism as an academic discipline began in earnest in the 19190s, although its roots go back to the late 1970s grew through the 1980s, and by the early 1990s ecocriticism had emerged as a recognizable discipline within literature departments of American universities (The Nineteen-Century Literature).

The term ecocriticism was coined by William Rueckert who first used it in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” (The Ecocriticism Reader…xi). Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold From (western-oriented critics) define ecocriticism as “…the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Thomas Inyabri states that the term “…attempts to assess the relationship between literature and the environment, and how creative writers have in turn further factorized the image of the environment in their creativity”(63). Chris Onyema defines ecocriticism as “…a critical perspective (that) brings environmental considerations to bear within diverse literary contexts…”(From Boom…207).

From the above definitions, one can glean that ecocriticism is an environment or nature conscious theory that midwifes the interpretation of (African) literature.

Furthermore, the main thrust of ecocriticism is its attack on “ego-centrism” or “anthropocentricism” (in literature) and its advocacy for eco-centricism or the centering man by, “…giving nature back its subjectivity” (Caminero-Santangelo 699). Anthropocentricism in literature refers to the act of focusing literary themes, subject matter, and characterization on exclusively human concerns, while nature or the non-human environment is ignored. In other words, ecocriticism assumes that literature has been too humanistic in its approach; it elbows out nature by representing it as inert, exploited, dominated and as that which is acted upon. With respect to this perceived misrepresentation, Glen Love states that “…literary studies have remained indifferent to the environmental crisis in part because our discipline’s limited humanistic vision has led to a narrowly anthropocentric view of what is consequential in life” (Glotfelty and Fromm xxx). Michael Benneth and David Teague contributing to the discourse, proposes the appropriated direction for eco-critical discourse. They recommend that ecocriticism “…explore urban, social-justice, and minority concerns from an ecological conscious point of view that avoids being exclusively anthropocentric” (Love 29). Hence, the two scholars advocate for nature to be the lens through which human issues may be deliberated upon.

Another unique quality of the theory is the interconnectedness of all things. Glotfelty and Fromm note that “… human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and being affected by it. Ecocriticism takes interest in the interconnections between nature and culture” (xix). This places nature as an integral part of humanity and man as a crucial part of nature, both having the power to make or mar each other. The relationship between man and nature is a
sentiment shared also by African writers and critics of literature. Of all the criteria of judging nature-conscious literature under the framework of ecocriticism, the interdependency of human and non-human nature appears to be the best converging point of both Afrocentric and Eurocentric points of views. It is at this juncture that African literature comes in, and can be constructively analyzed.

African Literature and the Environment

Before the emergence of the Anglo-American theory which enjoyed rapid and global environmentalist literary growth in the 1990s (Slaymaker 690), African literature had taken nature seriously. For instance one cannot read Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart without exploring the role of the natural environment in the social, judicial, religious and economic system of Umuofia. Achebe presents the evil forest of Umuofia as possessing a mystified and a powerful spiritual force, which the people reckon with. Others include Amos Tutuola’s The Palm Wine Drinkard, Nugigi wa Thiong’o’s The River Between, Ben Okri’s The Famished Road, Rene Maran’s Batouala and many more across all genres.

The term environment has taken on a lot of meaning in literature both African and western. In some it is regarded as everything non-human and for some, it includes both human and non-human elements. In African literature, both oral and written, the term land denotes both human and non-human elements of nature. Joseph Ushie “Land, Language and African Literature in A Climate of Decay” states:

“Land”, to the African, is an all-encompassing word to many an African, and it is the word of his/her emotion, and it immediately touches his/her soul and is closer and dearer to his/her heart and emotions…it includes the soil on which he grows his food, on which his shelter rests, into which his ancestors have been buried and into which he would be buried….Land also encompasses stream from which he fetches his potable water and the food therein and the water from which the domestic and wild life in the environment drink. Land also encases, to the African, the trees and the grass with all their endless uses including medicinal value of the vegetation. And of course, to the African, land also includes the fauna and even the atmosphere up to the clouds….Land has a deep religious significance to the African when we think of it as the link between him/her and his departed ancestors… (43).

The intricate relationship between the African and land make the two entities inseparable in African cosmology and literature. The ambiguity presented by “land” is not merely a matter of linguistic reference; it is rather due to the non-distinction between the man and nature in the African cosmology. Land stands for people and people for land. To the Eurocentric reader, it may appear that Ushie’s definition of land is too anthropocentric, or that it excessively demonstrates, environment’s usefulness to man. It is however necessary to establish that the way Europeans experience environment or nature is different from the way Africans experience nature (land). William Slaymaker in his “Ecoing The Other(s): The Call of Global Green And Black African Responses” observes that “…black African experiences of nature, it is often argued are different...(684). This paper agrees with Slaymaker’s position that environment is more
intricately woven into the life and cosmology of the African such that there cannot be a clean cut between the two promulgated by some western critics like Jhan Hochman who views nature as some kind of aesthetically pleasing phenomenon unconnected to human life and can only be afforded by the rich (Slaymaker 684). Another instance of man-nature connectedness is seen in the cosmological system of the Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria. The Igbo is one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, and the Igbo traditional belief system is shared by many African cultures. Afigbo, Adiele; a professor of history explains in his well researched *Ropes of Sand* the deification and veneration of environment in Igbo cosmology. He state that the Igbo evolved:

…a Cosmological system in which the Earth (*Ala or Ani*), now deified, occupied the Central place as the ordainer and guardian of morality, the source of law and custom...(the) worship of *Ala or Ani* (is) presided by *Eze Nri*,...(hence) *Ani or Ala* … now became one of the most vital functions of the *Eze Nri* to preside over its worship. Hence the domination of the Igbo world by the Earth Goddess (9).

The African’s relationship with the environment goes far beyond the relationship between an art collector and an art piece, is not a cosmetic relationship, hence for the Afrocentric writer or critic, studies on African environment must necessarily implicate human consciousness, as well as nature consciousness. Hence, the anti-anthropocentrism or “decentering” of man which the western originated ecocritism promotes does not accord with African literature. In a bid to forge a path for African literature, Donatus Nwoga a renowned African literary critic in his “Obscurity and Commitment in Modern African Poetry” recommends that African literature of environment should engage and commit to the circumstances of the African (38,41).

**The African Understanding of Environment**

African cultural practices indicate a strong bond between man and nature; this is evident in culture, traditions, written and oral literature. In the traditional Igbo society for instance, the culture forbids one to climb or pluck an *Udara* tree, one is expected to pick the fruits that fall off the tree. It is believed that plucking *Udara* is like aborting a fetus. It is also regarded as a taboo to fell a fruiting tree no matter the consequences. In the Igbo cosmology, the truncation of life, be it vegetative or animal life, is believed to bring serious consequences on both the offender and the community. Afigbo asserts that “…in Igbo thought every individual thing, including stone, has its *Chi*” or spirit-force, therefore, it is believed to have life which should be respected (127). The respect for vegetative life is evident in the treatment of yam in Igbo culture. Afigbo states that “the yam (is) the king of Igbo crops. Its spirit-force (*Njoku or Ihiejoku*), (is) powerful…it forbade people fighting or defecating in a yam farm… (127). Elsewhere in Obudu, Bekwara and Obanliku Local Government Areas of Cross River State, Nigeria, a similar culture is practiced. Joseph Usie explains that in Obanliku, “…they forbid disputes over ownership of fruit trees being settled in the vicinity of the tree for the reason that the tree would cease bearing (45). Afigbo further explains the importance of environment among Africans. He states that “It was the role which agriculture played in the life of the pre-colonial (Africa)...that determined the great
importance which they attached to land as well as the key place which land its spirit-force…occupied in their lives” (126).

Taking the African belief system into account, it is clear that non-westernized Africa is perpetually conscious of the non-human environment; it relates with it, depends on it, protects it and preserves it. This explains the human consciousness that is always present in afrocentric perception of environment. “Environment” which merely denotes non-human nature in western oriented analysis, is in fact, all-inclusive in African literature. It accounts for everything living and non-living, visible and invisible, human and non-human.

The environment in African literature is animated. The African understanding of nature or environment is that both human and non-human nature are alive, nature is not that which is distant, alien to, or removed from man, and neither is it that which exists merely to be acted upon. The Igbo cosmology incorporates nature, such that the Eze ji institution is a thing of prestige. Afifigbo states that “…the institution of the Eze ji (yam King) title among the Igbo (is) a prestigious title open to successful, freeborn farmers (127). In supports of this perception of environment, Ushie states that “Non –Westernized Africans, generally believe that non-human nature has feelings (45). In the African worldview, and in its literature, human abilities are projected unto nature; they include the ability to feel, to sense, to speak, to laugh, to weep, to see, to smell, to bleed and to die. This perception of nature’s ability to share in human sensibilities lies at the heart of the African understanding of Nature. Nature is considered to be in a single harmony with man, a relationship that is constantly reinforced for the benefit of man and nature.

Environment as Mother

Land is the major source of human sustenance both in Africa and elsewhere. The importance of Environment as the sustainer of the African cannot be overemphasized. Afigbo explains:

The land fed human beings with food just as woman feeds her children, it came to be conceived as a woman, mother. And because of the way it transformed crops when sown, god-like powers came to be attributed to it, leading to the deification of Ala (45).

In an agrarian society like the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, the natural environment is always included in the daily existence of the people where it plays the role of a sustainer, a mother. Many critics believe so too. For instance, Donald Herdeck, despite his western origin, recognizes, in his Introduction to Rene Maran’s Batouala that “…animals and the world of nature bulked extremely large in Africa’s agrarian societies” (Batouala 2). Just as the globally established roles of a mother, land serves as a source of food, drink, shelter, clothing and medicine, without which the African cannot survive. The Niger Delta community like many other African communities is an agricultural society whose local economy is largely dependent on the proceeds of agriculture. The rivers and streams that surround the community make for perfect fishing and farming activities, which in turn, boost the economic stability of the region.
Ojaide’s “Market day” is reminiscent about the a time now past, when there was an abundance of food in the Niger Delta, and how the region was sustained by its own home-grown products prior to the devastation of the environment by oil activities in the region.

In this market I can no longer get my needs,  
the same market that filled my forebears.

Where is the home-grown bean dish that sat  
living, dead, and tortoise to consort with greed?

Where is the palm oil red in its aroma that  
led spirits by the nose to swim in the bottle?

Where is the outlay of fabrics from home cotton  
That costumed the chameleon chieftain of fashion?

In the stanzas above, the persona speaks about the dearth of agriculture and the impoverishment of the people as a result of the loss of the environment. The land now famished and destroyed can no longer sustain the people. The monologue gives a sense of loss and longing for that which existed before. Ojaide uses a series of rhetorical questions to draw attention to the desperation of the situation, which creates a disharmony between human and non-human environment. Hence, in the absence of mother, the family is plunged into starvation and desperation.

snails men shunned as women’s food till they tasted  
The delicacy and always asked for them to round up;

porcupine meat that bristles covered till cooked  
For the salivating mouth to devour in bangasoup!

fresh fish that with lemon leaves for dinner cut short  
Children’s play outside before elders consumed all,

yams and beans that knocked out every adult and  
laid them flat to daydream in a world that is gone;

cherries and mangoes earned children their first coins;  
left them constipated from leftovers of their secret feast…(The Tale…25,26).

Mouth-watering cuisine of the region, many of which are seldom seen nowadays are described in the poem: “snails”, “porcupine”, “fresh fish”, “lemon leaves”, “yams”, “beans”, “cherries”, “mangoes” are all members of the non-human environment, both animal and vegetative life. The African depends squarely on land for his/her day to day sustenance. The streams and rivers and forests serve as sources of food and water for the human population. It is the contamination of this non-human environment on which man depends, that shifts the hitherto
harmonious balance between man and environment, resulting in hunger, disease, poverty, and criminal and violent activities in the region.

“The Goat Song” takes the form of a dirge where in Ojaide captures environment as a shelter that has been deserted.

The wind laments, its fans are burning out;
the trees have been shaved of their coiffures.

The big family is dying out-irokus fall; game leave in droves, and humans flee to hunger. (The Tale…10)

The environment is a shelter for not just man alone, but plants and animals as well. It is home to all. Hence, any threat to the environment invariably makes it uninhabitable. In the part III of “The Goat Song” the poet condemns the gas flaring done by Petroleum Industries in the region. The poet personifies the environment, for instance, “the wind laments” wind is ascribed the human attribute of lamentation, an expression of immense grief. Gas flaring produces a lot of heat which burns leaves that serve as wind breakers and also as a source of medicine. In the expression “The big family is dying out…” the man and nature are captured in the image of a family whose shelter is under attack, and whose lives are threatened. Earth, land, environment, like a mother, shelters this family. The Earth bonds man and nature like a mother bonds members of her family together with succor, nurture and shelter. Hence one may conclude that Ojaide portrays environment in the image of mother, who sits at the helm of affairs, and in whose absence both man and environment are plunged into hunger, death, disease, homelessness and other forms of suffering.

Environment as Deity

As an element of religion, environment is very significant to the African. Despite the encroachment of Christianity in to West Africa, certain communities have still retained the worship of ancestral gods and goddesses. The African traditional religion is practiced alongside Christianity in Nigeria and many other parts of Africa. Afigbo states that “In spite of the much advertised success of Christianity…the beliefs and practices (of African Traditional Religion) remain part of… (African) life” (181). Gods and goddesses like Egbesu and Olokun are worshiped by devotees of the African traditional Religion in the Niger Delta. Among the Igbo people, Ala, the Earth goddess is worship and a system of rules are put in place to venerate the Earth. The African traditional religion is closely tied to the environment as its elements of worship are got from the environment. The environment is crucial to the religion: the streams, rivers, forests, groves are ascribed a religious significance by the devotees. Members of the community both hold certain environments sacred; hence nature takes on a meaning on another level, on a spiritual level, for the Niger Delta as portrayed in “kaiama Bridge”

I see them retreat, flotillas of river spirits
Who for centuries, brought their spectacle to town
In yearly masquerades—they retreat seaward.
What becomes of us without their presence?

I see the oil-blackened currents suffocating
Mami wata and her retinue of water maids;
They leave fast the inhospitable dominion…(The Tale…33)

In addition to being a source of sustenance, the environment is also of immense religious
importance to the African. In a lecture delivered by Enaeme Eruvbetine an Urhobo-born
Professor of English, he states that reverine dwellers like the people of the Niger Delta tend to
associate some kinds of environment with supernatural forces like deities, gods and goddesses
(Concepts of Criticism.) Therefore, certain environments are considered to be sacred. So also
does the Niger Delta locate their god and deities in creeks and rivers around them. The landscape
and waterscape take on a supernatural meaning for the community. In “Kaiama Bridge” the
“flotillas of river spirits” refers to the deity popularly known as Mami Wata, a goddess of the sea
known (myth and legend) for her beauty and wealth; which she bestows on her devotees.
“Lessons From Grandma’s Night-time School” captures the benevolence of Mami Wata to
fishermen. The persona relates his devotion to the sea goddess in expectation of her benevolence.
He states that:

The Omoja was too shallow to follow to the sea;
rafts barely made it deep, I took to boats

And so fished the bigger stream Singing to Mami Wata
To bring me boatlands of good fortune from far depths (The Tale…20)

It is believed that Mamiwata lives in the water and in the event of a desecration of her
abode, she withdraws certain privileges from the community. Furthermore in “Womb-wrapped”
Mami Wata is reffered to as “the sea’s spirit”

The boat is bringing from the sea a beauty
With her mirrors and powder; the minstrel awestruck
The storm picked the sea’s spirit to litter her-
In her bed of coral, Mami Wata smiles to herself (The Tale…15).

Ojaide’s animation of the sea, a non-living element of the environment goes to show the
Africentric view of non-human environment as being alive and active in the affairs of the
African. Mami Wata’s ability to wield power over the community signifies the power of the non-
human environment over the affairs of the African. The sea and rivers and streams can sustain as
well as destroy just as a deity is believed to possess the power to bestow and to destroy. Deified,
the environment is alive in the African perception. And just as divine beings (in other religions)
are believed to interact and influence the life of man, so also does the highly ritualized African
environment is associated with supernatural powers.
Environment as Friend

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the relationship between the African and nature goes beyond the kind of relationship that exists between a lover of art and a work of art. However it does not mean that the African does not admire or enjoy nature’s beauty. Since nature is perpetually in his/her consciousness and contact, the African’s admiration of nature is more from a sense of commitment or involvement rather than apartness (from nature) as promulgate by western views. The African’s involvement with environment could be likened to the fondness between friends.

In “Priests, Converts, and Gods” Ojaide creates a beautiful picture of nature not as a still object, but as a performer.

It was futile explaining to them the divine splendor
When the archer sun shoots gold-tinted arrows between leaves;

It was a shame that those who loved colours didn’t see
The spectacle of rain, wearing reeds, perform a stilt dance (The Tale...12)

In examining the stanzas above, one experiences nature or non-human environment as something alive. The sun is described as an “archer” and the rays of the sun are “gold-tinted arrows (moving) between leaves”. The poet creates the image of a conquering warrior in his description of the rays of the sun passing through leaves and the image of a skillful dance in his description of droplets of rain. This image brings together all the senses; its spectacle is not just an image but an experience shared by the African. In both cases, the one can identify him/her as one with nature, and as such, any harm the environment suffers reverberates on man. Thus, the poet laments the destruction of the landscape in “Without the trees” and reveals an intimate relationship of the African and nature. The alienation which the poem evokes is almost like the loneliness of losing one’s spouse or a bosom friend.

Without the trees
the wind no longer gestures playfully to me

without the evergreens
nobody speaks the lingua franca to me

without the creeks
the rains no longer sate my voracious appetite

without the currents
the flying fish no longer makes sorties into my soup pot

without the sun (now fumigated)
the sunbird no longer plays patiently with me

without the shrubs (already devoured by fire)
the dew no longer delivers to me the message of dawn

without the farms
the butterflies no longer indulge me with colourful pageantry…(The Tale…38)

In “Without the Trees” Ojaide represents the environment as companion of the African, more like a familial relationship is expressed in every stanza of the poem. “the trees”, “the evergreens”, “the sun”, “the creeks, “the shrubs”, “the farms”, “the currents” and man interact as members of a family would. Held together by mutual dependency, need for interaction and reciprocal concern. Consequently, the threat a threat to the environment as has been established in the Niger Delta, is also shared by the people of the Niger Delta. The land is people and people, land. Ojaide demonstrates the African’s need for, and dependency on environment which automatically implies a reverence for the environment and a sense of duty towards the preservation of the environment.

The poem which takes the form of a dirge is in fact, mourning for a loss so great that it evokes a strong feeling of desolation and emptiness. It evokes a sense of void, an absence so strong and almost palpable. It calls to mind the sort of emptiness that can be brought about only by a loss of a beloved and cherished companion. Ojaide uses the devastated condition of the Niger Delta to reveal the lost friendship between man and environment.

The repetition of “without” in all the stanzas “Without the trees…/without the evergreens…/without the sun…/ shows the despondency of the African’s existence without the environment, to be out-of-touch for the African creates a void and an insatiable thirst, a longing for his/her land. It is within this the desperation created by the absence of nature in the poem, the one can better understand the meaning of nature in African cosmology and its literature. Hence, what anthropocentricity means for western literature does not apply in African literature. In relation to the environment, the African does not stand, as in the words of Val Plumwood “…apart from an alien other…” this alien being the environment.

An anthropocentric environmental perspective is human-centered, and sees the natural environment as a “storehouse of resources” at the disposal of, in the service of, or as an instrument of humans and human designs (Eckersley 26). This instrumentalism is the result of a “selfhood conceived as that of the individual who stands apart from an alien other and denies his own relation to and dependency on this other” (Plumwood Feminism 142). This is how Slatter sees himself vis-à-vis the natural environment (www.isle.Oxfordjournals.org).

In many coastal communities like the Niger Delta, the streams make an exciting source of relaxation for members of the community both young and old. People go there to swim during hot days or just as a break from hard work. In the poem “Swimming in waterhole” the persona remembers his childhood adventures in rivers and lakes.

We grew up to love rivers and lakes, open refuge
that saved children from the hard labour at home-

every parent knew where first to look for a missing child
before ever alerting the town-crier to beat the drum.

Many of us did not concentrate at school in anticipation
of going straight to swim until dusk when eyes turn red (The Tale…36)

Long before the advent of computers, Television sets, mobile phones and other electronic
gadgets, swimming pools, Cinemas, amusement parks and the likes, the African traditional
society has always had its sources of entertainment, all of which is derived from the African
environment. In many villages, the streams and rivers serve as a source of water and relaxation.
The coolness and serenity of the stream cannot be compared to the artificial swimming pool.
However, the pollution of these streams and rivers in the Niger Delta has brought about the
dearth of this mode of relaxation.

Conclusion

In summary, the Afrocentric experience of environment and the Afrocentric depiction of
environment in African literature show man’s need of environment, man’s relationship with
environment, man’s dependency on environment and man’s involvement as part of the
environment. If environment as perceived by the African is taken to be distinct from the
African’s existence, then, the concern and the need to preserve and protect it may be given little
or no consideration, or may not be taken as seriously as it is in eco-literature and other
environmentally conscious writings. Taking into account the images of environment discoursed
in this paper, one may conclude that as far as African literature is taken into consideration,
Anthropocentrism is implied in Afrocentric eco-protest literature which recognizes that
speaking for nature, personifying nature, making it alive, does not mean (for African literature)
an appropriation of nature’s voice, rather, it is a medium of experiencing and expressing nature as
the African’s neighbor. Nature is not a beautifully endowed visitor; it is rather an indispensable
member of the African family. More than the West, Africa has an even greater need to protect its
environment, because environment is for him/her a nurturing mother worthy of respect, a deity to
be revered and a bosom friend and companion whose company is always a jolly delight.
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