



---

**The Discourse of Nature and the Planetary Crisis in Nwanmuo's  
*The Wisdom of the King* and Onwueme's *What Mama Said***

**Emmanuel EbereUzoi**

Department of Performing Arts and Film Studies  
Lead City University, Ibadan  
Oyo State Nigeria

**Abstract**

*The engagement of Nigerian drama in the landscape of ecocriticism has been in the front burner of scholarly discourse in the last three decades. Many have argued that little is known or heard about the contributions of drama to this already vexed issue of arts and ecology. Literary critics over the years have x-rayed works done in this regard and given credence to other genres of literature leaving out drama out of the equation. However, drama overtime has not spared the neglect of nature and its eco-elements by the human race in its quest for survival. This paper takes a cursory look into the sphere of ecocriticism and the contributions of two notable Nigerian dramatists - Chris Nwanmuo and Tess Onwueme to the field of eco-humanism. Nwanmuo's *Wisdom of the King* and Onwueme's *What Mama Said* come into focus as among the many voyages of drama into the world of science. The objective here is to excavate the echoes of nature in these plays and from the discoveries in the study, these plays represent an apt description of the state of Africa's ecological landscape and the role mankind plays in this eco-degradation. Drama no doubt has a role to play and has been doing so in creating the needed awareness on humanity's place in curbing the anti-environmental activities going on in many parts of the African continent. The paper concludes that largely eco-problems are not just a consequence of exploitation and exploration of natural resources but largely a result of decades of neglect, inhumanity and poor leadership.*

**Keywords:** *Ecology, Ecocriticism, Eco-drama, Nature, Environment*

**Introduction**

Climate change, global warming, ozone depletion – all these have become popular clichés that have characterized various global summits aimed at confronting the environmental challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Nations of the earth have risen in one testament – The Earth's Charter to forge a common

cause aimed at addressing a reality that stares all in the face – a human race under peril due to the absolute disregard for nature. The first paragraph of that document reads:

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must stand together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations (echarter.org).

Natural and man-made disasters of catastrophic magnitude now ravage the entire globe. From flash floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, forest fires, draught, hurricanes, erosions, desert encroachments, air and water pollution, oil spills, every part of the earth shores in one sad story or the other. In Africa, humans have to grapple with the twin-devils of both natural and man-made disasters as well as conflicts and their attendant natural consequences of hunger, destitution, disease and poverty.

Amidst these realities is the question of the role of drama in addressing the ecological concerns of the earth. As stated by Chaudhuri, ecological victory will require a transvaluation so profound as to be nearly unimaginable at present and the arts and humanities, including drama, must play a role (Chaudhuri). McKibben equally adds his voice to this believing that playwrights, poets and artists need to create works which will place climate change deeply in the imagination (Ashden). Drama holds the power to help us see "something about ourselves" by touching some parts of our identity construct. Theatre is life – a reflection of who we are and what we do. Humans cannot be disconnected from the environment and hence, theatre needs and ought to reveal the common reality of the earth – the home of all human beings. This is more apt as "our human identity and the identification of what we refer to as nature, are now forever intertwined and dependent upon one another" (McKibben 11).

To understand the relationship of theatre and nature one must first refigure the relationships between 'culture' and 'nature' that all humans inevitably inherit. Modernist traditions of European 'enlightenment' pitched nature and culture, 'man' and the environment against each other in what Kershaw says has turned out to be a potentially disastrous opposition (12). Nature is human and humanity forms the whole ensemble that nature represents. Since theatre is life, then it only amounts to the fact that all human life is theatricalised and dramatised, including, crucially, its interactions with other species and the environment. The performance paradigm was thus a major generative force of

an age of ecology that emerged in the final five decades of the second millennium (Kershaw 14).

Chris Nwanmuo and Tess Onwueme have over the years contributed to the discourse of ecology and its relationship with the arts. The plays *Wisdom of the King* by Chris Nwanmuo and *What Mama Said* by Tess Onwueme question the hypocrisy of Nigerian leaders towards the degradation of the Niger Delta. These plays also bring a different dimension to the eco-discourse in Nigeria. The plays challenge all Nigerians irrespective of where they are domiciled to imbibe conservatory habits since "our bushes and natural environment provide us with most of what we need to survive" (Nwanmuo, 21). Nwanmuo's dramaturgy also focuses on disaster such as is being orchestrated by the changes of a warming planet. It exposes not only the nonchalance of Nigeria's leaders but also their ignorance to the reality of the economic, social and environmental deprivations that has destroyed many lives in the country.

### **Greening the Arts: Exploring the Trajectory of Ecology and its Connections with Drama**

The concept of the "Green theatre" is such that is shrouded in a lot of complexities owing to the fact that the word "Green" is not easily collocated. The green terminology spans across several disciplines from medicine to politics. We have heard of the word – The British Green Party, Green Capitalism, Green Consumerism, Green Theory, Green Socialists, Green Ecology, Greenpeace, Green shirts, The German Green Party, The American Green Party, The Green Economy, etc. However, the concept of 'Green' today has developed into a universally understood notion that non-human nature is given status, and that to protect it, the concept/ideology has come to include socio-political ideology. The traditional Green theory includes a critique of growth, environmental concern, scientific ecology, philosophical holism and the granting of status to non-human nature (Wall 29). Wall in his study reveals that in seeking to solve environmental problems, "Greens" have been forced to consider human affairs and embrace a set of political, economic, and cultural principles. "Any description of Green demands an exploration of approaches to human society. Solving perceived ecological problems undoubtedly demands a transformation of attitudes and institutions" (Wall 29). The world's economy as it stands today is largely driven by forces that put both man and nature under peril. Gaseous emissions from industries and exploitation of forest reserves can only be checked by an absolute change of not only attitudes but also of institutions that perpetuate this trend. Green theorist Schnaiberg supports this crucial element by reminding us that "all environmental problems are social problems regarding both their causes and effects" (17).

Based on the foregoing, we can safely state that the contemporary Green movement is not only an environmental movement but also a socio-political movement. Heinlein's study of proto-environmental performances in contemporary Western Theatre traced the history of this movement to the summer of 1962 when marine biologist Rachel Carson, previously a noted author of marine life books, stated the following:

As man proceeds toward his announced goal of the conquest of nature, he has written a depressing record of destruction, directed not only against the earth he inhabits but the life that shares it with him. The history of the recent centuries has its black environment passages. Now to these and others like them, we are adding a new chapter and a new kind of havoc, the question is whether any civilization can wage such relentless war on life without destroying itself, and without losing the right to be called civilized (Sale 3).

Today, more than fifty years after, the world is stunned by the truth of Carson's prediction. Humans now turned predators are preying on their own kind as conflicts ravage the entire globe. The quest for life's natural resources has been a major catalyst for war and other genocidal killings especially in Africa not to mention the complete disregard for the environment in the wake of continued plunder of natural resources.

No doubt the state of affairs calls for a social revolution and drama is one tool for such a resolution. The socio-theatrical work of Augusto Boal – *Theatre of the Oppressed* puts him as the philosophical forerunner to contemporary Green theatre. Boal validates performance as a weapon for social revolution, a means by which identity can be initiated (14). Contemporary Green practitioners have always sought for revolutionary change not only in behaviour but also in the structures that gives ambivalence to nature and the whole concept of a safe earth. Green theatre therefore presupposes a performance that is socially relevant and maintains its efficiency as a tool for creating widespread socio-ecological change (Heinlein 25).

For Gare, the world lacks stories or narratives of sufficient power and complexity to orient people for effective action to overcome environmental problems, to relate the multiplicity of social and cultural forms implicated in or affected by environmental destruction. Though, environmental problems are global yet there is need to formulate stories, craft performances and write plays about the lives of people and the history of societies in terms that Gare says will enable them to be understood in context of and as part of nature (45). The environmental challenge in many parts of the Third World especially Africa is not the same with developed nations. Gare's argument that global capitalism dominated by transnational corporations and financial institutions, and controlled by a new international bourgeoisie has exposed some of the most basic cultural structures on which Western European civilization in general and modernity in particular have been based is quite timely (114). If this be the case, then there is a need for a new kind of civilization – a Green civilization that is not only trans-historically and culturally relevant but also challenges this global hegemonic culture of transnationalization. This challenge can only be met when people are oriented in practice and in their daily lives to pursue the pathway of creating an environmentally sustainable civilization and drama as stated earlier is one such weapon that has the potential to meet this challenge. Already, there are contradictions in the global quest to solve the world's eco-crisis. The concept of sustainable development seems to globalize

environmental problems and consequently implies that only global solutions should be sought for 'local' eco-problems. This partly explains the seeming eco-hesitation by African critics to the global eco-crisis as conceptualized by the West. Africa today stands on the wrong side of the divide in the futile attempt to globalize the eco-crisis. While the continent continues to writhe in pain of the worst kind owing to a degenerating environment orchestrated by decades of exploitation of natural resources to fuel developed economies, increasing poverty has no doubt exacerbated bloody conflicts, genocide and terrorism. This trend no doubt puts the respect for life and nature in utter disregard. Maathai Wangari, a renowned African environmental activist was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in recognition of her efforts to halt deforestation in Kenya. For her, "peace on earth depends on our ability to secure our living environment" (<http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/contemporary-01.html>). She was arrested and jailed severally by Kenyan authorities for doggedness in challenging the very institutions that encouraged the continued plundering of Kenya's forest reserves. It is quite ironic that in Africa, those who challenged the forces that perpetuate eco-degradation have been met with stiff opposition. Nigeria also shares a similar story in Ken SaroWiwa who was summarily executed alongside eight others by the then military authorities for daring to challenge the continued devastation of the Niger Delta ecosystem by oil merchants. Since then, this region which holds the key to Nigeria's survival has not known peace.

African efforts at sustainable development have been targeted at fighting poverty by enriching scarce resources. For Africa, the only way to guarantee peace which is one of the goals of sustainable development is by meeting the needs of the current generations without jeopardizing the needs of future generations. This was the motivation for Wangari when she founded the Green Belt Movement that succeeded in planting 30 million trees in an effort to halt deforestation in Kenya. For her, "people are fighting over water, over food and over other natural resources. When our resources become scarce, we fight over them. In managing our resources and in sustainable development, we plant the seeds of peace" (<http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/contemporary-01.html>).

Glover's analysis of Escobar's work captures the current contraptions of sustainable development which he says are: 1) a 'saving the world mentality', which promotes the global at the expense of the local; 2) a belief that the world's poor create environmental problems, but which ignores how capitalism creates poverty in the first place; 3) a faith that capitalism's market structures can resolve ecological problems (54). To overturn these structures and engender a pathway for development that is Africa friendly, drama is and should be seen to be in the forefront to secure an environment of peace that guarantees the wellbeing of all peoples of the earth.

### **The Prehistoric Foundations of Eco-Engagements in Drama: Idealistic Inquest on Ecology and the Creative Process**

One cannot fully appreciate the inextricability of humans and nature vis-à-vis all life and the environment without due cognizance to the fact that we are all part of what Soyinka calls an 'integral cosmos' (4). Sullivan believes that the universe is now in its ecozoic era as the technological and industrial world birthed by the modern era is now our dying heritage (47). The wellbeing of all both animate and inanimate means the continued survival of all creation. In ancient times, the seasonal or New Year Festivals were intertwined with the wide spectrum of nature and its agricultural cycles, with the natural concrete phenomena of these cycles. These included sunrises and sunsets, the waxing, the full and the waning moon, the rising and abatement of the Nile or the flowing of the Tigris and Euphrates, the acts of planting and sowing new seeds or tending to a new flock, the blossoming and the reaping of the harvest (Schnusenberg 8). Life has always found itself manifest in the springs and rivers.

Ancient Egypt for example, was a Kaleidoscope of great festivals reflecting a drama as colourful as the prism of a rainbow that mirrored what Schnusenberg calls a "multiplicity of approaches" (19). Egypt's mythological dramas were punctuated by the rhythms of the cycles of nature, the central features of which were the water and the sun, manifested in the annual inundation of the Nile and the daily rising of the sun (Schnusenberg 19).

In Babylon, we see another connection between celebrated festivals and ecological factors as the seasonal year was defined by the equinoxes of summer and harvest season. During the rains, Babylon or Mesopotamia was usually threatened by violent floods which were dramatically personified by the monster *Tiamat*, who raised her head during the flooding of the rivers to swallow all that existed. This monster was, however, time and again subdued during the *Atiku* festival by the god *Marduk* (Schnusenberg 63).

The Greeks also refer to the feast of Dionysus, in prehistoric Athens, as the birthplace of drama. Lee's anthology captures the celebration of the Greater Dionysus in the spring and that "Dionysus is a god who dies and is reborn, his return the creative root bursting into literal flower" (193). In Aristophanes' *The Frogs* (405 B.C.) *Aeschylus* addresses *Dionysus* saying: "How say'st thou son O' the goddess of the Greens?" (Dukore 5). Prehistoric Japan also sees the invocation of the souls of the dead through the power of the sun. The sun is often associated with the soul of the dead. The revitalization of the sun goddess exemplifies the nature of *Lagura* (Heavenly Cave Door), which presupposes that through the performance of song and dance, it is possible to "restrain or secure within the body" the life span of a person that appears to be departing (Asai 13). In the Caribbeans, context of transplantation and Diaspora sees the individual, the community and the land inextricably linked in the process of creating history. Landscape is a character in this process and its deepest meanings need to be understood (De Loughrey and Handley 7).

In Nigeria, the tropical rainforest is home to a variety of indigenous species of wild and domesticated yams, cocoyam and three-leaved yams. Its fauna includes cows, goats, chickens, elephants, leopards, and monkeys. Nigerian rural settlement's primary means of livelihood include farming, hunting and resource gathering. Population in Africa, as Barau puts it is bolstered by what nature offers it (96).

In the past there were also various species of fish, reptiles and insects. Birds ranged from eagles to kites and parrots while indigenous trees, which later became major cash crops, included the oil palm, raphia palm and hardwood such as iroko and mahogany. Value systems in Africa and Nigeria in particular are embedded in their religious beliefs, customs and traditions which were to a sufficient extent drawn from the physical and metaphysical environment (Barau 98).

The tense used for describing the abundance of eco-wealth above suggests that this is no longer the case owing to years of exploitation and subsequently extinction. Current events indicate that most of the eco-life of these regions has been depleted owing to new found religions that preach that all ancestral trees including birds that co-habit them are now bastions of fleeing evil spirits. The trend in most of these communities is to see people cutting down trees in the name of professing a new found faith that labels such irreplaceable natural heritage as evil. Orjiji points out that festivals in honour of ancestors and the god of yams were celebrated between July and August. The peak is a theatre-like assemblage of the whole community in an arena where a masquerade representing the 'earth-goddess' is welcomed with a resounding ovation (4). In Yoruba dramaturgy, some forests were delineated according to their functions. There is the religious grove (*IgbóOró*), small, uncultivated forest near the community. One can also still find the *Igbóegúgun* where the ancestral masquerades prepared for annual community rituals (Pinkston and Warren 158).

The world and indeed Africa's prehistoric performative arts is functionally linked with the quest for survival and the continued strive for sustainability in life's support systems and the environment. Here we find that the environment gives inspiration to the birth and growth of drama. This branch of art is intertwined with nature and ecology and hence, the continued survival of life is the story that drama creates. No story is complete without the complexities of life's struggle with nature and the environment.

Drama no doubt emanates from man's interaction with nature. The anthology of most dramatic traditions share a similar story of a continued struggle with 'life' that eventually gives birth to what we now call drama. From the dithyrambic processions of the Greeks to the rituals in the jungles of Africa, all share a similar performative eco-history. Shakespeare in *Hamlet* (Act III, Scene 2) says:

The purpose of playing, whose end,  
both at the first and now was and is to hold,

as twere, the mirror up to nature;  
to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image,  
and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure”  
(108).

It is however not accidental that drama finds its root in nature and humans' continued struggle to dominate and control the environment. Western scholars refer to the feast of Dionysus as the birthplace of drama. As recorded by Lee, the renewal of life after winter was celebrated in the Greater Dionysia in the spring, and that “Dionysus is a god who dies and is reborn, his return the creative root bursting into literal flower” (Lee 193). In Aristophanes' *The Frogs* (405 B.C.), Aeschylus addressing Dionysus says: “How say'st thou, Son O' the goddess of the Greens? (Dukore 5). Nature by inference gave birth to drama. Drama all over the world is traceable to humans' continued interaction with the forces exuded from the environment. As captured by Giannachi and Stewart “nature is always performed and can only be appropriated by means of performance. The ontology of nature lies in the performance of nature – in nature's capacity to appear as action or in our capacity to act within it” (20). The reciprocity of the relationship is quite obvious – nature echoes drama and drama echoes nature. Nature has always been in the arts. She has always represented not only a major point of reference for art but also a substantial means to provoke politically and aesthetically. For Giannachi and Stewart:

It is in great part through its engagement with nature that art has time and again proven that it can subvert the social and political status quo. This is because nature marks a complex phenomenon that is utilized to define the real, with all its political and ethical implications, whilst also embracing culture, with all its aesthetic and philosophical relevance (21).

In Africa, where we find a dramatic tradition that predates her contact with Europe, the primitive roots of all theatrical tradition is sought in the numerous religious rituals and festivals that marks the African conquest of the forces of nature. As can be deduced from documentary evidence, African drama is an embodiment of the first struggles, first preoccupations, first successes and setbacks of the African (Ogunbiyi 3). Drama in this clime grew out of man's acquired knowledge of his environment. It is an art that celebrates the sharpened awareness about nature.

On the other hand, early modern literature presents narratives that emphasize pro-ecological values like interdependence, unanticipated consequences and the limits of human ambition (Mentz 155). This is quite apt for Africa's pre-colonial oral performances. Dancing and acting as a form of rites were functional as these were done to ensure the steady supply of nature's good and to ward off adversity that may spring up from the same natural force. The myths, stories, tales, songs and proverbs that surround these rites were an expression of the wish for bountiful production and the experience of the human mastery over nature. Shakespearean drama also offers self-



consciousness about literary invention that can help renovate narratives about human beings and the natural world. Shakespeare's plays model a mutable system for coming to terms with change and catastrophe, and they help shape future conversations about remediation and stability (Mentz 156). The interplay between nature and humanity and the resultant consequences either for good or for bad forms the bedrock of the foundations of drama all over the world.

### **Nwamuo's *The Wisdom of the King* and the Ecological Concerns of the Niger Delta**

Nwamuo's *The Wisdom of the King* tackles the twin-devils of deforestation and the attendant consequence of eco-degradation in Nigeria. King Duke sits on the throne of Umuhu where he decrees that all trees be cut down in a bid to cure his erroneous mindset that trees and the forest gives his domain the semblance of a bush kingdom. The conflict in the play centres on conservatory practice which the people of Umuhu hold in high regard but at the same time goes against the grain of the king.

Just as it is in the character of every dictator, the king was hell-bent on carrying out his order to have all trees felled, but quite interestingly his wife warns against any such attempt by husband. His dreams also were against him and this forced him to seek the mediation of a spiritualist who also warns against the action by the king in the following dialogue:

King Duke: Tell me. Should I allow the bushes around us remain? Or should I order that they be cleared? What are the implications? Find out for me.

Jide: ... You stand against the wall. You stand for tree with blunt cutlass.

You look sick. You no get help. Make you no cut any tree. I see you sleep under big tree. Blood dey for the tree.

King Duke: Whose blood?

Jide: I no know (*pause*). I see you walk for desert. No tree (*the owl hoots again. Silence*).

King Duke: What does that mean?

Jide: I no know o... Make you be careful with forest ... Leave the forest alone (30-31)

The above encounter forecloses the dilemma of a country cut within the web of deforestation and desertification. Rampaging cattle herders are currently drifting south of Nigeria owing to the drought precipitated by an encroaching desert. The fertile land for grazing has turned into desolate land-space buried in sand. No doubt this situation has pitched farmers and herders on a constant war path and quite recently these conflicts have taken a genocidal twist.

*The Wisdom of the King* also brings to limelight the belief that African socio-cultural environment is self preservative. The people of Umuhu will not give up

the forest for the king so as to entrench the concept of urbanization. They would do anything to protect what the king called 'bushes'. This further buttresses the fact that the African is nature friendly. Afforestation remains the solution to deforestation. The play brings to light the urgent need to reclaim what is left of the earth's natural resource of which the forest is the chief. As Councillor, one of the characters in the play put it, "As a wise king, you know that our bushes and natural environment provide us with most of what we need for survival. The environment is like a mother to us. To destroy the bushes and forest is to threaten our existence". (21-22)

### **Onwueme's *What Mama Said* And The Ecological Concerns Of The Niger Delta**

*What Mama Said* is set in the metaphorical state of Sufferland, whose people are starving and routinely exploited and terrorized by corrupt government officials and multinational oil companies--that is, until a voice erupts and moves the wounded women and youths to rise up and demand justice. Onwueme's powerful characters and vibrant, emotionally charged scenes bring to life a turbulent movement for change and challenge to tradition. Aggrieved youths and militant women--whose husbands and sons work in the refineries or have been slaughtered in the violent struggle--take center stage to "drum" their pain in this drama about revolution. Determined to finally confront the multinational forces that have long humiliated them, Sufferland villagers burn down pipelines and kidnap an oil company director. Tensions peak, and activist leaders are put on trial before a global jury that can no longer ignore the situation.

The play - *What Mama Said*, by Osonye Tess Onwueme focuses on the effect of national and global oil politics on women, youth and impoverished rural Nigerians. Although the setting of the play is in the Niger Delta, issues raised by this drama can be universalized to depict the economic dynamics of the global capitalist ideology that creates a highly impoverished and exploited African environment. Onwueme according to Maureen Eke returns to this perennial theme, the disempowerment of rural woman, those who --till the land, those who have the power to make and unmake the land (12).

Onwueme typically uses names of rivers as characters in the play. Imo, Oni and Oshimi are women who galvanize the energies of other women to lead a revolt against the activities of oil merchants in the region. The conflict in the play hinges on the deprivations suffered by women in this oil producing community exemplified by the lack of kerosene, an essential household commodity hoarded by Pipeline, an oil dealer. The women with the help of Imo, surreptitiously plan a revolt against these oil lords and with the charismatic leadership of Oshimi and Cross River, they in the end succeeded in dislodging these merchants by gaining control of their resources.

The play also brings to light the subject of eco-degradation in Nigeria. One of the reasons for the agitations in the Niger Delta is the pollution and oil spills that destroy both sea life and farmlands. George-Ukpong believes that nature's

contribution to observable changes in the Niger Delta environment is probably not that spectacular to the people.

The South-Southern Nigerians at the coastal region have been conversant with the peculiar hydrology. They could understand the tidal behaviour of the Atlantic Ocean, the flood regime of the rivers, the physical quality of the estuaries, and even the influence of sea water as it intrudes into inland waters. But the scum of crude oil in rivers, rivulets and creeks that induces fish-kill; the man-made canals and water ways that distort the swamps and mangrove ecosystems and drive species to extinction, and the waste/burrow pits and toxic waste dumps all became alien to them since the advent of oil exploration in their land. Perhaps much more strange and disturbing is the continuous burning of natural gas since the late fifties (57).

The entire eco-system in this area no doubt is on the path to extinction due to the continued pollution caused by oil spills. *Imo*, one of the characters in the play states thus: —And look around you see? They're not even killing us alone. The trees too!(Onwueme 43). This situation reflects the situation in the creeks, a scenario where all life is of no consequence whether human, beast or plants; all are consumed in the desperate quest for oil.

The play also criticises the national leadership's abdication of its responsibility to protect the people. When men fail, women can arise and bring about the change they want. The play invokes this reality by re-enacting the women's rebellion of the 1980s against multinational oil corporations who polluted their farmlands. Women's protest against the exploitative presence of foreign oil companies is not new in these regions. The anger is justified by the fact that their primary source of livelihood which is fishing and farming is gradually being eroded by oil pollution. This anger is further fuelled by the poverty and destitution that pervades the entire area despite the enormous wealth extracted from the land. In movement three of the play, the conversation between Cross River, *Imo*, *Oshimi* and other women draw attention to the effects of environmental degradation orchestrated by male exploitation of women and their means of livelihood. The following dialogue captures it thus:

**Imo:** Did you hear how much the so called leaders spent globe-trotting and renovating their mansions in the state capital?  
**Women:** No tell us.  
**Imo:** Billions  
**Women:** (*Alarmed*) eh?  
**Imo:** Enough to feed this nation for centuries!  
**Oshimi:** And here we are.  
**Cross River:** Begging

**Imo:** just to be able to survive.  
**Women:** One day? Just one more day!(*Pause*).  
**Imo:** And look around you'll see?  
They're not even killing us alone. The trees too!  
**Oshimi:** Our farmlands!  
**Cross River:** And rivers  
**Oshimi:** The environment  
**Cross River:** pollution  
**Oshimi:** Polluting the land, the river, our entire environment.  
**Women:** All polluted  
**Imo:** You said it.  
**Oshimi:** Then she said it.  
**Imo:** They're killing everything with their oil pollution  
and spillage. We cannot breathe clean air. Fishes die or get fried  
in the polluted simmering rivers. Water-water everywhere. But  
we have no clean water to drink! And now we lose the land too.  
**Oshimi:** No firewood because the plants and trees are  
soaked in oil. What do they expect us to cook with? (Onwueme  
43-44).

The above scene no doubt underscores the fact that women bear the brunt of the continued depletion of the earth's resources. When the environment is pillaged, women come under the pressure.

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, it therefore becomes imperative that we re-evaluate the eco-relevance of Nigerian literary studies within the period that the Earth and her challenges became a concern. This is imperative since the already manifest effect of a warming planet is visibly taking its toll on the country. The ambience of Nigeria's environment resonate the tone of a catastrophe. Where are the green savannahs that once lavished the landscape of the Northern Nigeria offering grazing to the cattle of the herdsmen? It is not in doubt that disappearing grazing land in the Northern Nigeria is a major catalyst for conflicts that have ravaged this region in recent times. Needless to say that gas flares and oil spills in the Niger-Delta, erosions in the South East and devastating floods in the Middle Belt spell a reality that Nigeria is not isolated from the looming global eco-catastrophe.

The platform to interrogate this concern is Nigerian drama. In the face a presumed eco-absence in what has preoccupied the thematic concerns of Nigerian drama in recent years; this study becomes more apt and indeed appears timely as it calls for a paradigm shift in scholarly discourse of Nigerian drama. This wakeup call seems to be gaining relevance as we have in the last ten years seen the emergence of a new dimension to Nigerian dramatic writings that engages issues surrounding the environment. The point needs to be stressed here that echoes of nature or the environment have been reverberating in the play texts of Nigeria since the first literary dramatic text emerged. This is

due to the fact that the cultural setting is strongly intertwined with the natural environment.

### Works Cited

Asai, Susan Miyo. *Nómai Dance Drama: A Surviving Spirit of Medieval Japan*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group INC, 1999.

Ashden Directory. "Where are the Plays? Asks Bill Mckibben". *Ashden Directory*. May 2005. The Ashden Directory, 12 October 2005. <<http://www.ashdendirectory.org.uk>>

Barau, Aliyu Salisu. "Bridge – building between Literature and Environmental Values of Africa: Lessons from Things Fall Apart" in *Themes Fall Apart but the Centre Holds*. Eds. Ushie, J. & Abdullahi, D. Lagos: Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), 2009. Pp. 92-105.

Boal, Augusto. *The Rainbow of Desire*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Chaudhuri, Una. *Staging place: The geography of modern drama*. University of Michigan Press, 1997.

DeLoughrey, Elizabeth., &George Handley. *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Dukore, Bernard F. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, INC, 1973.

earthcharter.org. "The Earth Charter: Preamble", [www.earthcharterinaction.org/content](http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content). Accessed 17/04/2012.

Gare, Arren. *Postmodernism and the Environmental Crisis*. London: Routledge, 1995.

George-Ukpong, Iniodu. *Nature Under Siege: Portrait of Environmental Crisis in the Niger Delta*. Bloomington: Author House, 2012

Giannachi, Gabriella. & Stewart, Nigel. *Performing Nature: Explorations in Ecology and the Arts*. Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2005.

Glover, Leigh. *Postmodern Climate Change*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Heinlein, Kurt Gerard. "Green Theatre: Proto-Environmental Drama and the Performance of Ecological Values in Contemporary Western Theatre". A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, December 2006.

- Kershaw, Baz. *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Lee, Lance. *The Death and Life of Drama: Reflections on Writing and Human Nature*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005.
- McKibben, Bill. *The End of Nature*. New York: Andor Books, 1999.
- Mentz, Steve. "Tongues in the Storm: Shakespeare, Ecological Crisis, and the Resources of Genre" in *Ecological Shakespeare*, Bruckner, L.D. & Brayton, D. (eds), Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011.
- Ogunbiyi, Yemi. "Introduction", *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*. Ibadan: Nigeria Magazine, 1981.
- Onukaba, AdonayiOjo. *The Killing Swamp*. Ibadan: Caltop Publications (Nig) Limited, 2009.
- Onwueme, Tess. *What Mama Said*: San Francisco: African Heritage Press, 2002.
- Orijiji, John N. *Political Organization in Nigeria Since the Late Stone Age: A History of the Igbo People*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Pinkston, Jennifer & Warren, Michael D. "Indigenous African Resource Management of a Tropical Rainforest Ecosystem: A case study of the Yoruba of Ara, Nigeria". *Linking Social and Ecological Systems: Management Practices and Social Mechanics for Building Resilience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Nwanmuo, Chris. *3 Plays*. Owerri: AP Publications, 1996.
- Sale, Peter F. *Our Dying Planet: An Ecologist's View of the Crisis We Face*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011.
- Schnusenberg, Christine C. *The Mythological Traditions of Liturgical Drama: The Eucharist as Theatre*. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2010.
- Schnaiberg, Allan. & Kenneth Alan G. *Environment and Society*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1994.
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Minneapolis: Filiquarian Publishing, LLC, 2007.
- Sullivan, Edward O. *Transformative Learning: Educational Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.
- Wall, Derek. *Green History: Environmental Literature, Philosophy and Politics*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

womeninworldhistory.com "Today's Nobel Peace Prize Heroes: Linking  
Present to  
Past". <[womeninworldhistory.com/contemporary-01.html](http://womeninworldhistory.com/contemporary-01.html)> Accessed  
22/12/2014.