

Re-Reading Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in the Context of African Environmentalism

Charles Agboola Bodunde
Department of English, University of
Ilorin, Nigeria
Email: bodundecharles@gmail.com

Saeedat Bolajoko Aliyu
Kwara State University, Malete, Kwara State, Nigeria
Ilorin, Nigeria
Email: saeedat.aliyu@kwasu.edu.ng

Abstract

Achebe's (1958) classic novel, *Things Fall Apart*, is the first African novel to portray Igbo culture and give a detailed history of pre-colonial and colonial incursion into Africa. It is the position of this essay that as the novel provides insights into the culture, politics, economy and history of pre-colonial and colonial periods, it would also offer a reading of the environmental perspectives of these periods. This essay employs both sociological and environmental justice approaches in its investigation of the environmental perspectives depicted in *Things Fall Apart*. This dual approach allows for the exploration of a strategy that African writers engage in to depict a complementary relationship between humans and the environment wherein both parties benefit. The essay concludes that the environmentalism that emerges from the analysis indicates an awareness of a connectedness between all components of the biosphere. This informs the symbiotic relationship between man/woman and the environment and this is central to achieving environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Things Fall Apart, Achebe, African culture, environmentalism, symbiosis, social consciousness. (171 words)

บทคัดย่อ

นวนิยายคลาสสิกของ ซินัว อะเซเบ ตีพิมพ์ในปี 2501 เรื่อง Things Fall Apart เป็นนวนิยายเล่มแรกที่พูดถึงวัฒนธรรมของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ Igbo ซึ่งเป็นกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ทางตอนใต้ของประเทศไนจีเรีย และยังให้ข้อมูลทางประวัติศาสตร์ช่วงก่อนการล่าอาณานิคมและช่วงการล่าอาณานิคมในทวีปแอฟริกา นวนิยายเรื่องนี้นอกจากจะให้ความรู้เกี่ยวกับ วัฒนธรรม การเมืองการปกครอง เศรษฐกิจแล้ว ยังเปิดมุมมองเกี่ยวกับบริบทด้านสิ่งแวดล้อมในช่วงเวลาดังกล่าว บทความนี้เลือกใช้ทฤษฎีด้านสังคมวิทยาและด้านสิ่งแวดล้อมเพื่อเป็นกรอบในการวิจัย มุมมองด้านสิ่งแวดล้อมที่ปรากฏในนวนิยายเรื่อง Things Fall Apart ผู้วิจัยได้พบวิธีการเขียนที่นักเขียนชาวแอฟริกัน ถ่ายทอดให้เห็นความสัมพันธ์ที่เอื้อเพื่อซึ่งกันและกันระหว่างมนุษย์และสิ่งแวดล้อม และจากการวิเคราะห์ทางด้านสิ่งแวดล้อมนิยม ทำให้เห็นการตระหนักถึงการเชื่อมโยงกันระหว่างทุกองค์ประกอบทางชีวภาค แสดงถึงความสัมพันธ์แบบการอยู่ร่วมกันระหว่างผู้ชาย ผู้หญิง และสิ่งแวดล้อม ซึ่งเป็นหัวใจสำคัญของการรักษาสิ่งแวดล้อมอย่างยั่งยืน

คำสำคัญ: Things Fall Apart อะเซเบ วัฒนธรรมแอฟริกัน สิ่งแวดล้อมนิยม ความสัมพันธ์แบบพึ่งพาอาศัยกัน จิตสำนึกของสังคม

Introduction

The late Twentieth Century recorded a significant growth in the awareness of the challenges posed to the environment. These challenges, attributed to increasing human population, put a strain on available natural resources needed to cater for the growing number of people. Similarly, the monumental pollution from industries and other machineries is aiding the extinction of many plant and animal species causing changes in the features of the environment and in known weather patterns. In the United States of America, the first Earth Day, celebrated on the 22nd of April 1970, marked the beginning of formal campaigns for safer handling of the environment. This set the stage for global attention paid to the environment as consciousness about the need to maintain a certain level of balance became widespread.

Prior to this boom in environmental consciousness, literary scholars wrote about the environment, recording, commenting and theorizing on it. In the West for instance, the romantic movement focused on pastoral images and the therapeutic possibilities of human interaction with elements of nature. This advanced the movement's advocacy for humans to retreat to nature, and nature protection. The transcendental movement also read moral and spiritual guidance into nature.

African literary artists also engaged with the environment as a trope in works predating the boom in environmentalism. Mwangi (2004) lists Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Zakes Mda, Kristina Rungano, Maria Manuela Margarido and Okot p'Bitek as a generation of writers whose works showed engagement with the environment. Niyi Osundare's (1986) *Eye of the Earth* is equally seminal in the historicism of the environment in African writings. Postcolonial challenges however, redirected the deployment of the environment to more political engagement – Vital (2008) suggests that postcolonial novels subordinate

the writing of nature to engage with “suspicion of the modern nation state” (p. 87), his exploration of J.M. Coetzee’s *Life and Times of Michael K.* as an exemplar of postcolonial ecological thinking, was thus a thorough historical and materialist contextualization of the text on the basis that environmental issues, “need to be rooted in local (regional, national) concern for social life and its natural environment” (p. 88).

African Literature and Environmental Consciousness

Africa’s contributions through creative writings and critical perspectives to the environmental debate remain largely unrecognized by Western critics. This is attributable to the differing culture-based conceptualization of the environment. Western biologically oriented ecocritics such as ecologists and bio-centrists opine that the bane to environmental sustainability lies in an anthropocentric conception of the environment (Levin, 1999, p. 1097). An anthropocentric conceptualization suggests that the environment exists to serve the needs of man. This leads to wo/man objectifying the environment, using it the way they want thus leading to its destruction. Clark (2011) identifies this anti-anthropocentric ideology in the way Thoreau (1854) shifts from an almost exclusively human focus in the opening chapter of *Walden* to an exclusive focus on nature in the succeeding chapters.

Anti-anthropocentrism promotes a hands-off nature approach, a nature-for-nature’s-sake ideology. Watson (1983) suggests that components of the environment should be allowed to “manifest themselves naturally” without human interference arguing that it sets the human species apart as though they were not a part of the environment. He proposes instead that human interest should be at the fulcrum of any model of environmental sustainability:

The only way man will survive is if he uses his brain to save himself. One reason why we should curb human behavior that is destructive of other species and the environment is because in the end it is destructive of the human species as well (p. 254).

Anti-anthropocentricism is at the core of the environmental values promoted by Western ecocriticism. Revisionist arguments have emerged for the expansion of both the genre of ecocritical literature and values. Bennet (2001) proposes a “social ecocriticism” (p. 32) that gives commensurate attention to built environments just as it does to natural ones. Martinez–Alier (2002) and Nixon (2011) advance an “environmentalism of the poor” that engages with environmental justice concerns. Vital (2008) advocates for an African Ecocriticism through a materialist apprehension of environmental discourse. He also argues for the contextualization of environmental values and an engagement with modernity to reveal the implication on the human/nature relationship. This, he adds will, “join the struggle to enable social worlds to find more equitable, sustainable, and healthy ways of inhabiting place” (p. 87). Caminero–Santangelo advances African environmental studies as countering western repression of social and political implications with models which foreground social and political issues as central to the study of the environment. That human concerns have a commensurate emphasis with environmental issues in African texts is understandable given that many African societies are still confronting challenges to basic survival and improvement to standards of living. African writers consider engagement with human concerns in their works as imperative, as a clarion call to help reposition their societies to be favourable for not a few, but for all. This influences the conflation of human and environmental concerns in African texts wherein environmental issues are foregrounded through the influence they have on humans.

The mystical perspective about the environment combined with the utilitarian perception engenders a wholesome environmental ethic quite different from that found in Western cultures. This accounts for why Musengezi (1999) in her short story “Crocodile Tails” states her lack of enthusiasm over pictures of the environment taken by her European counterparts that did not have humans in them:

School holidays provided a time to travel...When school opened for the new term, they brought back big envelopes, fat with photographs. They enthusiastically passed them round at tea-time in the staff room for all to see. They gasped, again, at the full-colour pictures of a leopard resting on the branch of a tree, at a herd of buffalo...I was not enthusiastic about the photos. What was there to see if they had no people in them? The beauty of the pristine wild was beyond me. (pp. 134–135)

Musengezi’s non-appreciation of the “beauty of the pristine wild” (p. 135) arises out of a culture-induced difference in the conceptualization of the environment. The African views his/her environment as a functional part that plays a major role in the preservation and sustenance of the human race. Obiechina (1975) describes this as a worldview that implies a utilitarian outlook instead of an externalized appreciation of nature:

[T]he beauty of the particular tree comes to be inseparable from its “vital” property, demonstrable in pharmaceutical or magical efficacy or the shade it provides from the heat of the sun. The uniqueness of a particular stream or wooded landscape resides in some supernatural manifestation, either as the abode of a communal deity or a local spirit identifiable with the destiny of the community. The rainbow is apprehended first and foremost as an externalization of an internal force portending good or ill for an entire community. Nature is not

“other” as in the industrialized and urbanized West, but is apprehended by the traditional West African as an integral part of his world order. (p. 42)

Saro-Wiwa (1992) also describes the economic, spiritual and life-giving belief systems that the Ogoni people of Nigeria’s Niger-Delta region attach to the environment thus:

To the Ogoni, the land on which they lived and the rivers which surrounded them were very important. They not only provided sustenance in abundance, they were also a spiritual inheritance. The land is a god and is worshipped as such... To the Ogoni, rivers and streams do not only provide water for life – for bathing, drinking etc.; they do not only provide fish for food, they are also sacred and bound up intricately with the life of the community, of the entire Ogoni nation. (pp. 12–13)

In spite of this seemingly anthropocentric outlook, the environment is not an exploited object. There are measures of control or reciprocal duties to it. An inherent symbiosis exists as the basis of the human/environment relationship, and cultural practices, significantly influenced by religiosity, obligate the African to protect the environment from destruction.

As social constructs, African literary works reflect this complementarity and it is through this symbiotic human/environment relationship that we examine Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. This essay aims at revealing environmentalism rooted in a mutually beneficial relationship between humans and the environment in African literature. As an historical novel, *Things Fall Apart* provides a re-evaluation of how Igbo society conceived of, and interacted with, the environment.

Achebe’s (1958) *Things Fall Apart* is popular for being a rebuttal to Joseph Conrad’s 1899 novella, *Heart of Darkness*. In the

second Chancellors lecture of the University of Massachusetts, Achebe describes Conrad's novella as the impetus for writing the novel:

Heart of Darkness projects the image of Africa as “the other world,” the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality. (1977, p. 1785)

This present study takes Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* a step further. It is a re-reading of the novel to examine how indigenous Africans conceived of, and related to the African environment. This Afrocentric re-reading is imperative as it provides background to contemporary human/environment interactions. It is also pertinent in view of the inadequacies of applying Western thoughts in the analysis of African literatures. Palmer (1979) succinctly encapsulates the inherent inadequacies of such endeavours when he states that the African writer's inspiration and occasionally their technique, are informed by African culture and social experience which renders such productions non-western. He adds that, “[i]t will therefore be a literary crime to measure what is after all an indigenous African form, putting across an indigenous African point of view, by an alien standard” (p. 2).

Hence, while focusing on establishing the vibrancy of African culture in the novel, Achebe succeeds also in foregrounding how Africans interact with the environment, an affirmation of Garrard's (2012) position that ecological literacy can be evinced from literary texts.

Environmental Perspectives in *Things Fall Apart*: Religiosity and Functionalism

Achebe's depiction of Igbo's interaction with the natural environment in the novel reveals what is mostly nature-worship or animist practices. Mbiti ascribes animist sensibilities in African

environmental conceptualization to the highly religious nature of Africans:

It emerges clearly that for African peoples, this is a religious universe. Nature in the broadest sense of the word is not an empty impersonal object or phenomenon; it is filled with religious significance. Man gives life even where natural objects and phenomena have no life. (1969, p. 56)

Achebe portrays this in many instances in the novel in affirmation that the African religious system inflects upon all human activities from farming, hunting and trading to social, cultural and judicial activities. It is also a position that underscores the existence of a close interaction between the human community and the natural environment:

[b] ehind novels, short stories and poems there is this immense presence of a patrimony, a land, a people, a way of life. But while characterizing that land, detailing the history of its many crises, Achebe sees it as the one unchanging feature of the artistic and moral landscape, as the permanent being to which all efforts of the children of the land must be devoted. (Echeruo, 1975, p. 151)

This worldview of interconnectedness between nature and humans informs the belief that natural disasters are a sign of disequilibrium to an otherwise balanced world. They are disruptions caused by humans who have committed a taboo or who have transgressed and caused an innocent person some form of harm. Restoration of this equilibrium is performed through sacrifices and atonements to Gods and Goddesses. Uchendu in the exposition of how the Igbo maintained cosmological balance says:

...the Igbo believe that these social calamities and cosmic forces which disturb their world are controllable and should be

“manipulated” by them for their own purpose. The maintenance of social and cosmological balance in the world becomes, therefore, a dominant and pervasive theme in Igbo life. (as cited in Ogbaa, 1999, p. 98)

The agrarian community of Umuofia in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* ascribes bountiful harvests to both the dedication that the farmer shows to his farm and to the periodic worship of, and sacrifice to, Gods and Goddesses of the earth and other elements. In recognition of the importance attached to this, the community dedicates a week to honour the metaphysical powers that assist their plants to produce abundantly. This is what informs the reaction of priest of the earth when Okonkwo violates the week of peace:

You know as well as I do that our fore-fathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbour. We live in peace with our fellows to honour our great goddess of the earth without whose blessings our crops will not grow ... The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish. (Achebe, 1958, p. 24)

This is again, why the priestess of Agbala whom Okonkwo’s father, Unoka consults with over his poor harvests retorts that, “...when a man is at peace with his gods and his ancestors, his harvest will be good or bad according to the strength of his arms” (Achebe, 1958, p. 14).

The tendency to imbue non-living environmental agencies with life serves the dual purpose of justifying the worship of nature, and promoting the belief that man and the environment interact on physical and spiritual levels. As stated earlier, the interaction between humans and the environment is one of reciprocity. This reciprocity involves,

but is not limited to, humans supplicating to and worshipping certain environmental elements. Abubakar (2011) posits that these elements in turn are expected to show benevolence to man. The dependence on man for supplication diminishes “the powers of the empyrean and gives the impression of man’s leverage to manipulate them to do his bid” (p. 380).

However, there are limitations to how humans manipulate the environment. Human manipulations of natural elements are all within bounds as the reciprocal relationship is more symbiotic than exploitative. Achebe portrays this in his concise description of the limitations to a rainmaker’s ability to control the weather, an element crucial to the success or otherwise of the farming enterprise. The recognition of the limitations to human manipulation of environmental agencies prevents exploitation and destruction. Uchendu (as cited in Ogbaa, p. 100) sums it thus: “Because reciprocity is the organizing principle of Igbo social relationships, near equality is their ideal.... A relationship that is one-sided either in its obligation or its reward system, does not last among them”.

Certain animals also enjoy elevated status because of the belief that both biotic and non-biotic environmental elements have souls or serve as an abode for supernatural beings. The royal python of Mbata, for instance, is “the emanation of the god of water” (p. 126). Achebe keeps the death of Okoli, who is suspected to have killed the royal python of Mbata, shrouded in mystery. According to the novel, the royal python is an animal, which, if killed accidentally, would require “sacrifices of atonement and... an expensive burial ceremony such as was done for a great man” (Achebe, 1958, p. 127). Achebe states that Okoli “had fallen ill on the previous night. Before the day was over, he was dead. His death showed that the gods were still able to fight their own battles” (Achebe, 1958, p. 129). Achebe thus depicts the

snake as possessing powers of extracting penance from any human who engages in a transgressive action. Incidences like this one are ways through which Achebe tries to uphold the validity of Igbo/ African culture in the face of the colonial imposition upon their culture and religion.

Another worldview is the belief that elements such as trees, rocks, water bodies among others are abodes of spirits and the ancestors. These non-biotic components of the environment become totems representing spirits and gods. This is why they are imbued with human characteristics, and sometimes, ascribed metaphysical abilities. For instance, “the big and ancient silk-cotton tree” near the playground of Umuofia, houses the spirits of good children (Achebe, 1958, p. 37). The priestess of the earth whom Unoka consults describes Unoka’s parcel of overused farmland as “a reluctant soil” (Achebe, 1958, p. 14). This evokes the imagery of a component with a will, which may be convinced to do humankind’s bidding if it so wishes. The implication of such an anthropomorphic depiction of the soil is that it is conceived as capable of social influence and accountable for its actions (Waytz, Epley, & Cacioppo, 2010).

The earth in Igbo society is a constant and ever-present natural phenomenon. It is a living being, with rights. The earth is sacred to the people for its multiple roles of productivity in association with agricultural activities, and sacredness for serving as the abode of the ancestors. Ogbaa quotes Achebe who in an interview with Cott (1981) describes the African belief about the earth thus:

The earth goddess Ala – the most powerful deity of the Igbo pantheon ... is even more powerful than the supreme god because of her closeness to us; the earth is where our crops lie, where we live, and where we die. (Ogbaa, 1999, p. 184)

The earth is also conceptualized as female, motherly, fertile and pure. Okonkwo's successful interaction with the soil springs him from poverty to greatness. It is also out of respect for her purity that people who die of strange or contagious diseases, or those who commit suicide, are not buried in her bowels. Rather, they are taken to the evil forest to rot away above the earth, as is the fate that befalls both Unoka who dies of the swelling and Okonkwo who commits suicide.

The African belief in the interconnection of the spirit world with that of the living is what Soyinka (1990) describes as "past, present and future being so pertinently conceived and woven into the Yoruba worldview of life" (p. 143). Ogbaa (1999) dubs the belief in the three levels of human existence— the spirit world of the ancestors, the world of the unborn which exists in the wombs of pregnant women, and the earth as the world of humans— as defining the Igbo trinity. The interconnection of these three worlds manifests itself in a holistic system of religious, social, economic and environmental ways of life that are hinged on attaining balance for the continuation of human existence. Ancestor worship thus becomes a means through which the world of the living relates with the other worlds. This is pertinent as Achebe depicts that the Igbo believe that their ancestors are inhabitants of Ala, the earth goddess's bowels, and they help intercede for the human community. Achebe explores this in *Things Fall Apart* through the conversation between Mr. Brown, the white missionary, and one of the great men in Umuofia, Akunna. Akunna posits that just as Christians pray through Jesus, the son of God, they also supplicate to the Gods through the ancestors.

Dysfunctional Scholarly Interpretations of Environmental Tropes

Critics of African literature have more often than not polarised the functionality attached to some components of the environment as depicted in literary works. For instance, Nchoujie (2009) describes Achebe's portrayal of the forest as both protective and productive on the one hand, while on the other, "it remains an area to be dreaded, a death trap of and an accomplice in sinister crime" (p. 111). His justification for the second description of the forest hinges on it being the site for the killing of Ikemefuna by the elders of Umuofia, in addition to the fact that the forest is a site for disposing of the bodies of those who contract, or die from, contagious diseases. The position this essay takes is that the forest served as sites for carrying out acts crucial to the protection of the human community such as protecting the living from contagious diseases. Unoka, Okonkwo's father, is banished to die in the forest when he comes down with the swelling. The forest also serves to conceal acts that the community deemed necessary but which could negatively affect the psyche of the larger members of the community if carried out in the open.

In addition, Nchoujie (2009) attributes Okonkwo's beating of his wife for cutting the leaves of a banana tree as a sign that he (Okonkwo) was speaking or acting on behalf of the tree:

Apostles of ecopoetics like Cheryll Glotfelty, Harold Fromm, William Rueckert, Lawrence Buell, Dana Phillips and the 2004 Nobel Prize winner for environmental protection, Kenya's Wangari Maathai, would have applauded saying, "Well done, Mr. Okonkwo, for being the mouthpiece of that tree which stands helpless in the face of its aggressor" (p. 113).

Nchoujie (2009) interprets Okonkwo's action as arising from the need to preserve the banana tree for the banana tree's sake. This critic disregards the cultural significance of a banana tree in pre-colonial Igbo society. It is the position of this study that Okonkwo's reaction is predicated on the economic and nutritional potential of the tree. As a member of an agrarian community where a man's success is determined by the size and contents of his barns, Okonkwo's reaction is conditioned by the potential impedance of its productivity with the cutting of the leaves. Additionally, the character of Okonkwo depicted in the novel does not permit for an appreciation of nature. His hatred for his father's art, which he sees as being of no value, depicts him as having no understanding of aesthetics that does not translate into better conditions for him and his family.

It must be stated that Achebe does not endorse all of the African customs depicted in the novel. The killing of twins and the ostracising of mothers who deliver twins, the existence of a caste of outcasts, and human sacrifice (Ikemefuna's murder as a case in point), are some of the negative practices that Achebe attributes to the unravelling of the cultural system. These practices propel victims to seek the haven provided by missionaries who brought a new religion of acceptance, seeming equality, and respect for human life to Igbo communities. This group of Africans converted to Christianity and helped to fight against tyrannical customs and religious practices. Protest attacks against the growing influence of Christianity fails because the converts have become untouchable, "no one could kill them without having to flee from the clan, for in spite of their worthlessness they still belonged to the clan" (Achebe, 1958, p. 124).

The sacredness of the life of a member of the clan, which protects clansman from being killed, increases defiance. Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, deserts his father's religion because he finds peace in

Christianity, peace from the trauma of hearing the pitiful cries of abandoned twins in the forest and the killing of Ikemefuna. Achebe depicts these practices as internal factors that aided the superior weaponry of the British colonizers in the eventual collapse of traditional Igbo society.

Conclusion

In an interview in 2003, Kunene stated that when human concerns are absent from literary works, such works effectively become a part of the genre of non-African literature (Ojaide, 2009, p. 5). This accounts for African literary works responding to the existence of the people even as they engage with environmental concerns. Ojaide (2009) also makes this assertion when he states that:

Many African literary works deal with subjects that in the Western canon will be described as “extra-literary,” suggesting that they should not be legitimate concerns of writers. However, what is “extra-literary” to the Western critic is intrinsic to the African writer, who, because of the historical predicament and tradition, draws materials from the socio-political happenings around him or her. (p. 5)

Achebe (1986) also states that, “[p]erhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure. But who cares? Art is important but so is the education of the kind I have in mind. And I don’t see that the two need be mutually exclusive” (p. 58).

The environmental perspective discernible from African literary works reflect Achebe’s position combining environmental issues with the survival of the human race. As such, these writers are conscious of reflecting the human/environment interaction from a symbiotic perspective that limits the plunder of the environment. Ogbaa (1999) cites Basden’s documentation of the traditional Igbo people’s awareness of the risks of over using the environment:

the dependence upon local natural resources, and the contentment with the barest modicum of those articles which are usually regarded as indispensable in a household, all these, together with the easy-going spirit amongst the village folk, foster and maintain a life of extreme simplicity. (Ogbaa, 1999, p. 89)

This awareness of the risks of depleting natural resources and the limitations imposed on how individuals and communities utilize these resources in traditional African societies can be argued as predating the current environmental rave in metropolitan centres. This environmental harmony through the abundant natural resources which European explorers discovered when they got to the continent made it especially attractive to colonisers, whose exploitation of Africa's natural resources has turned the continent into one of the regions of the world most affected by environmental degradation.

References

- Abubakar, A. (2011). Eco-imagination and Socio-Political Sustainability in Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* and Walcott's *Ti-Jean and His Brothers: A Comparative Analysis*. In D. D. Kuupole, I. Bariki, & R. Yennah (Eds.), *Cross-Currents in Language, Literature and Translation* (pp. 372-385). Republic of Benin: Editions Sonou d'Afrique – Université bilingue.
- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Achebe, C. (1977). An Image of Africa: Racism in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. *The Massachusetts Review*, 18(4), 782-794.
- Achebe, C. (1986). *Morning yet on Creation Day*. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Basden, G.T. (1966). *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*. London: Frank Cass.
- Bennet, M. (2001). From Wide Open Spaces to Metropolitan Places: The Urban Challenge to Ecocriticism. *ISLE*, 8(1), 31-52.

- Caminero–Santangelo, B. (2007). Different Shades of Green: Ecocriticism and African Literature. In T. Olaniyan & A. Quayson (Eds.), *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory* (pp. 913–914). New York: Blackwell.
- Clark, T. (2011). *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Conrad, J. (1899). *Heart of Darkness*. United Kingdom: Blackwood.
- Cott, J. (1981). Chinua Achebe at Crossroads: An Interview with the Nigerian Writer. *Parabola: Myth and the Quest for Meaning*, 6(2), 33–37.
- Echeruo, M. J. (1975). Chinua Achebe. In B. King & K. Ogunbesan (Eds.), *A Celebration of Black African Writing* (pp. 150–163). Zaria, Nigeria: Ahmadu Bello University Press.
- Garrard, G. (2012). *Ecocriticism*. London: Routledge Press.
- Levin, J. (1999). “Letter”. *PMLA*, 114(5), 1097–1098.
- Martinez–Alier, J. (2002). *The Environmentalism of Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Mbiti, S. J. (1969). *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Musengezi, C. (1999). Crocodile Tails. In Y. Vera (Ed.), *Opening Spaces: Contemporary African Women’s Writings* (pp. 128–136). England: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Mwangi, E. (2004, October 24). Nobel Prize: A Shot in the Arm for African Eco–Criticism. Retrieved from http://www.asle.org/wp-content/uploads/ASLE_Primer_NobelPrize.pdf
- Nchoujie, A. (2009). Things Fall Apart Fifty Years After: An Ecocritical Reading. In J. Ushie & D. Abdullahi (Eds.), *Themes Fall Apart but the Centre Holds* (pp. 106–118). Lagos: Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA).
- Nixon, R. (2011). *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. U.S.A.: Harvard University Press.

- Obiechina, E. (1975). *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ogbaa, K. (1999). *Understanding Things Fall Apart: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents*. London: Greenwood.
- Ojaide, T. (2009). Examining Canonisation in Modern African Literature. *ASIATIC*, 3(1), 1–20.
- Osundare, N. (1986). *The Eye of the Earth*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educ. Books Nig.
- Palmer, E. (1979). *The Growth of the African Novel*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Saro-Wiwa, K. (1992). *Genocide in Nigeria: The Ogoni Tragedy*. London: Saros.
- Soyinka, W. (1990). *Art, Dialogue and Outrage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thoreau, H. (1854). *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*. New York: Franklin Watts.
- Vital, A. (2008). Toward an African Ecocriticism: Postcolonialism, Ecology and Life & Times of Micheal K. *Research in African Literatures*, 39(1), 87–106.
- Watson, R. (1983). A Critique of Anti-Anthropocentric Ethics. *Environmental Ethics*, 5(3), 245–256.
- Waytz, A., Epley, Nicholas., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2010). Social Cognition Unbound: Insights into Anthropomorphism and Dehumanization. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 19(1), 58–62.