
ПРОГЛАД

Издание на Филологическия факултет
при Великотърновския университет „Св. св. Кирил и Методий“

кн. 1, 2023 (год. XXXII), ISSN 0861-7902

DOI: 10.54664/OPLQ9956

ВОДЕЩА ТЕМА НА БРОЯ: *ТЯЛО И УМ В НЕВЕРБАЛНОТО И ВЕРБАЛНОТО ОБЩУВАНЕ*

*Philomena Ama Okyeso Yeboah**, *Philip Kwame Freitas***,
*Paul Otoo****, *James Gyimah Manu*****

“THE TREES SHAKE THEIR HEADS IN DEFIANCE”:

ECOCRITICAL INSCRIPTIONS IN SELECTED GHANAIAN POEMS

Recently, environmental issues have taken central stage both in the literary and non-literary world due to human continuous neglect, exploitation and abuse of the environment. The present study examines how literature serves as a tool of caution and awareness to reveal human unfair treatment of the environment. Through eco-criticism and textual analysis, four Ghanaian poems – “Breaching the Silence Code,” “Modernity and its Reapings,” “Lone Maize” and “Amakom Flowers” – are examined to highlight the eco-critical issues raised in Ghanaian society and Africa at large. It becomes evident that the ecosystem is constantly under threat and if humans do not find ways to curb these threats, there is a high probability that the environment will be destroyed. The study concludes that ecocriticism as a theory not only offers a refreshing perspective into reading the poems but helps bring forth pertinent environmental issues that are detrimental to the safety and sanctity of the environment.

Keywords: *ecocriticism; eco-critical issues; environmental issues; exploitation and Ghanaian poems.*

Напоследък екологичните проблеми заемат централно място както в литературния, така и в извън-литературния свят поради непрекъснатата експлоатация и злоупотреба с околната среда. Настоящото изследване показва как литературата служи като помощно средство за осъзнаване на ситуацията и за разкриване на несправедливото отношение на хората към околната среда. С помощта на екокритиката и текстовия анализ ще бъдат разгледани четири стихотворения от Гана – „Breaching the Silence Code“, „Modernity and its Reapings“, „Lone Maize“ и „Amakom Flowers“, за да се подчертаят екокритичните въпроси, наболели в ганайското общество и в Африка като цяло. Екосистемата е под постоянна заплаха и ако хората не намерят начини да ограничат тази опасност, има вероятност околната среда да бъде унищожена. Авторите заключават, че екокритиката като теория не само предлага нова гледна точка към четенето на стихотворенията, но и помага да се

* **Philomena Ama Okyeso Yeboah** – Senior Lecturer at the Department of English, PhD, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi – Ghana, philooyeso@yahoo.ca;

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5241-3331>

** **Philip Kwame Freitas** – Graduate Assist. Prof. at the Department of English, MPhil candidate, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi – Ghana,

pkfreitas77@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0137-638X>

*** **Paul Otoo** – English tutor at St. Hubert Seminary Senior High School, Kumasi – Ghana,

paulotoo84@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0404-265X>

**** **James Gyimah Manu** – Lecturer at the Department of English, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi – Ghana,

jgyimahmanu@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4418-2307>



подчергяят екологичните проблеми, свързани с безопасността и неприкосновеността на околната среда.

Ключови думи: екокритика; екокритични проблеми; проблеми на околната среда; експлоатация и ганайски стихове.

Introduction

Currently, the world is being plagued by various environmental issues that threaten to destroy the environment and everything in it. These eco-disasters stem mainly from human interactions with the environment, which intentionally or unintentionally put the environment in irredeemable crisis. Consequently, the world continues to suffer from global warming, drought, deforestation, pollution, flooding, desertification, land degradation, over-exploitation of natural resources and many others.

Literary writers, in their bid to educate and reform their societies, continuously try to represent and explore eco-critical issues in their literary works. This is why Achebe (1965) asserts that the writer must be involved in the re-education and regeneration that must be done in their societies. In the same light, Yeboah et. al also hold a similar view that “writers always write to reflect the socio-politico cultural conditions of the societies and eras in which they find themselves” (2022: 206) hence the need for correctional measures. Consequently, quite a few African writers have taken a keen interest in exploring ecocritical issues in their works. Notable among these works are Ibrahim Al-Koni’s *The Bleeding of the Stone* (2002), Chimeka Garricks’s *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* (2006), Helon Habila’s *Oil on Water* (2010), Veronique Tadjo’s *In the Company of Men* (2017) and many others. Also, there are others who address these ecocritical issues mainly in their poems: Kofi Awoonor, Kofi Anyidoho, David Diop, Birago Diop and many others. This simply affirms the importance of ecocritical issues not only for African literature but for the entire continent.

Ecocriticism is mainly concerned with how literature responds to environmental issues. Glotfelty, for example, asserts that ‘ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment’ (2007: xviii). Here, Glotfelty affirms that the term ecocriticism is a critical study that focuses on the human relationship with the environment, especially in a time when environmental crises abound. Ecocriticism, then, can be approached as an area of critical studies that explores how literature operates as a tool to explore, inform and showcase various environmental issues that exist in our world and suggest good practices through which they can be managed or curbed.

Such a fair representation of the environmental crisis in literature is in the focus of this study; which is to examine ecocritical inscriptions in some selected African poems and also to observe how the ecosystems are constantly under threat by human action or lack of action.

Ecocriticism: The Approach to the Study

The concept of ecocriticism is known to have been coined by William Rueckert in his 1978 essay titled *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*. In this essay, Rueckert discusses the importance and need of literary criticism to address issues of ecology in the world. Since then, ecocriticism has become a household name in the world of literature due to its peculiar ways of addressing various environmental issues. It is therefore understandable when Buell posits that ecocriticism is the ‘study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist’s praxis’ (1995: 430). From Buell’s definition, it is clear that ecocriticism seeks to uphold the standards and required ways of navigating through the environment without damaging it in any way. Ahmed and Hashim also opine that ecocriticism is simply how man’s relationship with his physical environment is reflected in literature (2012: 2). This relationship as reflected in literature advances the argument of not only the role of humans in the destruction of the environment but also the question of what can be done to uphold the sanctity of nature. It is in this light that Buell posits that eco-crisis is mainly a ‘crisis of the imagination, the amelioration of which depends on finding better ways of imaging nature and humanity’s relation to it’ (Buell 1995: 2).

The field of ecocriticism also embraces different perspectives on the issues of environmental crisis. Thus, Slovic defines ecocriticism as the ‘study of nature writing by way of any scholar approach or, conversely, the scrutiny of ecological implications and human-nature relationships in any literary text,

even when that text seems oblivious of the non-human world’ (2008: 27). However, ecocritical studies are contextually more comprehensive than simply concerned with the nature of writing by virtue of their pledge and stance for the protection of the environment and the relationship between the human and non-human world (Mishra 2016:168). Ecocriticism, therefore, places emphasis on appreciating and protecting the environment and nature. Barry asserts that eco-critics are mainly interested in how ‘to re-read major literary works from an eco-centric perspective, with particular attention to the representation of the natural world’ (2002: 264).

This study will primarily look at the ecocritical inscriptions embedded in some selected African poems of Stephen Kofi Okleme and Cecilia Sefa Amoafowaa and how these poems serve to educate and inform us on eco-issues in our world, specifically Africa. These two writers explore pertinent environmental issues in their anthologies but their poems have not attracted much attention in the literary space and/or are often overlooked. This study is also an attempt to bring to light their significant contribution to the world of literature, especially in terms of addressing eco-issues.

Methodology

The study employs a close textual reading of four selected poems, two from Stephen Kofi Okleme’s poetic book, *Reconciliation and other Poems* and two from Cecilia Sefa Amoafowaa’s *Excursion on and African Mind*. Hawkins asserts the instrumental role of textual analysis as a ‘methodology that involves understanding language, symbols...in texts to gain information regarding how people make sense of and communicate life and life experiences’ (2018: 2). The study further grounds its argument and analysis of the poems in the theory of ecocriticism; attention will therefore be given to how both poets have employed language in a creative and skillful way to unravel the ecocritical issues in the Ghanaian context and the world in general. Both poets in their anthologies addressed pertinent problems, especially ecocritical issues, but somehow these poems have not been critically examined in the research space so this study is also meant to bring awareness to the poems of these two brilliant poets.

Humans and the Environment

The importance of literary responses to environmental issues is a matter that cannot be overlooked or downplayed. It creates a space and an avenue for the world to be fully informed about the various ways our actions and inactions cause damage to the environment. Also, through these ecocritically inspired texts, we can understand and better appreciate the benefits we receive, whether consciously or unconsciously, from the environment.

In Amoafowaa’s poem “Breaching the Silence Code” in six stanzas, the poetic speaker recounts the stark tragedy that has befallen the earth at the hands of humans from the constant abuse of trees, streams, rivers, the earth itself and everything in the sky and how the tragic consequences trigger the earth to fight back to ensure its own safety and survival. The idea of humans playing a major role in the disruption of the ecosystem is explored throughout the first five stanzas of the poem;

When the cotton bloomed
As it wished without danger
Of being loomed.
For the benefits of strangers
To their field,
There was silence!

Breaching the Silence Code

The cruel attitude towards the plant is instantly seen in these lines. Cotton in its infinite beauty and growth does not feel safe in its own environment because of the human tendency to cause harm and damage to it. The use of the words ‘wished’ and ‘loomed’ shows the certainty with which the cotton believes that humans will reap it to their own benefit. By using the word ‘wished’ the poetic speaker also makes known the desire and hope of the cotton to be safe and allowed to bloom. However, this is



not possible because danger looms. In this sense, the poem suggests the embodied presence of human danger that emerges only to cause harm and threaten the plant. The argument of human cruelty towards the environment is further extended in the following lines;

When the trees soared
 Up, up into the skies
 Without the danger of being bored
 About being turned into shelter, fire or
 dice
 For the benefits of strangers
 To their field,
 There was silence!

Breaching the Silence Code

In the above lines, we see the indiscriminate cutting of trees by humans. Trees are no longer allowed the time and space to grow as they used to. The persona's repetition of 'up' 'up' into the skies shows their limitless and boundless growth which is constantly checked by the detrimental actions of humans. Trees are now cut down prematurely for cooking and heating and sometimes for fueling steam engines that generate electricity. They are also cut down entirely to construct buildings to improve human life but not the environment. The symbolic significance of the tree in an African communal culture cannot be overlooked in this context. Traore elaborates on the importance of trees in the African community in his ecocritical reading of Awoonor's "The Cathedral," he asserts that "trees were revered in Africa as providers of comfort along journey routes and in homes" (Traore 2019: 75). Apart from being generous oxygen producers, trees symbolize communal unity and foster a sense of togetherness. It is under the tree that soars 'up' 'up' into the skies that the elders in our communities sit to make decisions and perform important traditional rites. Thus, by cutting down trees, we deny ourselves oxygen for survival, we destabilize the soil and cause havoc to the homes of wildlife, and we uproot a part of our cultural identity.

Human activities that damage the Earth itself are reflected upon in the third stanza in the lines below:

When the earth was intact
 Without piercy-woundings digging its treasured parts
 And turning it in fact
 Into many shiny parts
 For the benefits of strangers
 To their field,
 There was silence!

Breaching the Silence Code

Here the lyrical speaker introduces us to the evils of excavation machines and other inventions that require the digging of the ground and how these destroy the environment. The use of the word 'intact' suggests that the earth was full, solid and unblemished until man began digging its surface. The poetic speaker describes these diggings as 'piercy-woundings.' By suggesting that the earth is wounded, the earth is again personified by showing that the actions of humans do not only damage the earth but hurt and destroy it. By digging borrow pits, artificial lakes and other holes for the mining of minerals, humans further mutilate it.

Human – mainly astronaut – intrusion into the skies and its dire effects on the environment are also made clear in these lines;

When the moon, sun, stars and thunder
Owned the skies
And there were no intruders putting it asunder
Committing the sun to burn the beneathers who fry
In retaliation to show the strangers
That they are the bosses
There was silence!

Breaching the Silence Code

The poet identifies the act of humans travelling to the skies as an invasion. What once used to be a sacred place for only these celestial bodies, has now turned into a space encroached upon by human action due to human exploitative and intrusive nature. The poetic use of the word ‘asunder’ in the third line brings forth the Biblical quotation ‘what God has joined together let no man put asunder’ (Gospel of Matthew 19:6). By employing this Biblical allusion, Amoafowaa establishes that humans have no place in the skies and as a punishment for our intrusion, the sun burns everything beneath the skies. The sweltering sun that we experience on earth, which sometimes causes bushfires (displacing wildlife and ruining the plants and trees), and heavy torrential rainfalls which flood our homes are all the result of human violent interaction with the earth.

The first five stanzas of the poem start with the ‘wh’ interrogative pronoun ‘when’ which refers to a time in the past to show that things are not as they used to be. This speaks to the idea that there is a change and it does not benefit the environment but only humans (strangers). Thus, the repetition of the line ‘for the benefit of strangers’ in the first three stanzas of the poem draws attention to the fact that human interaction with the environment only benefits humans and destroys the environment. The use of the word ‘strangers’ shows immensely how nature has distanced itself from the human world to the extent that no familiarity is present between them.

The concluding stanza of the poem reveals the truth that all forms of life that exist in the environment are fighting back against human unfair treatment and fighting for their survival. This is captured in the following lines;

Now everything rebels
The animals talk back and walk
The trees shake their heads in defiance
The rivers and streams run at top speed roaring and crushing everything their way
The air curls and whispers in strange and fearful tones
The earth stretches and expands seizing many defaulters in her bosom
Everything points at the breaching of silence of the earth.

Breaching the Silence Code

Here the poet strategically uses the word ‘rebels’ to show how the earth opposes and fights against humans whose actions destroy the sanctity of the environment. The poetic speaker alludes to tidal waves, storms, hurricanes, earthquakes, deluges, and tsunamis as some of the ways in which nature rebels to destroy and displace humans. They come as a result of nature being fed up with human intrusion. By personifying animals, trees, rivers, streams, air and the earth, the poetic speaker not only humanizes them but also invests them with power and injects them with terror as these elements roar and crush everything that come their way, these elements of nature ‘whisper in strange and fearful tones’ and stretch and expand – the use of these verbs that connote violence further concretizes the rebellion of nature.



The last line of the sixth stanza is teased out from the last line of the first five stanzas of the poem and points to a possible state of expectation – ‘there was silence.’ The poet repeatedly shows that in spite of the unfairness and exploitation the natural environment faces, nature is patient and does not retaliate immediately, as the last stanza suggests. This reveals the significance of the title, “Breaching the Silence Code” as ultimately, a warning about the moment when nature will reach its breaking point where it will no longer observe its canons.

In the second poem, “Modernity and its Reapings,” Amoafowaa points to the many disadvantages that come with modernity and how humans have abandoned their traditional ways of life which are what is fair and right to fully adapt to western modernization that is deemed corruptible and destructive. This poem articulates how violent modernization has negatively affected both humanity and its environment.

It seems long ago when living was simple
 Money, gold, diamonds and silver had no murderous hands in ruling
 It seems long ago
 When apparels were simple and the feet were best sources of leg protection
 It seems long ago

Modernity and its Reaping

The poetic speaker takes us on a brief journey into the past where people were content with their old and simple ways of life devoid of any harm or danger. The second line describes how the mining of gold, diamond and silver is mainly used to facilitate ill intent, especially in the world of politics. The use of the phrase ‘murderous hands’ not only suggests that these natural resources are exploited for evil purposes, but it also highlights the fact that the earth is literally battered, burned and blown up to get these natural resources that are ultimately seen as prerequisite for human material welfare.

The idea of the absolute destruction of the ecosystem by modernity is made clear when the poem asserts that

It seems long ago
 When we breathed the scent of the earth without inhaling sickness
 herbs can’t cure

Modernity and its Reaping

These lines warn us that the excesses of modernity such as industrialization causing air pollution and different forms of synthetic chemicals emitted in the atmosphere leave the environment unhealthy and make it uninhabitable. This destruction of the earth is so apparent that breathing now exposes us to danger – a kind that only the same modernity that is killing us can thwart. The irony this presents intensifies the plight not only of humanity but the environment as well. By addressing the lack of potency in herbs, which used to be the main cure for so many ailments, the poetic speaker establishes the extent to which modernity has robbed us of our old ways, exposed us to diseases, and endangered us.

The repetition of ‘it seems long ago’ eight times in the poem presents an ironic portrayal of the circumstance at hand. The poetic perspective hinges on the word ‘seem’ to acknowledge that it has not been that long ago when the world was content with its old ways of doing things. Here, attention is given to how fast modernity has taken over the world, thus, the title, “Modernity and its Reapings,” largely points to the consequences of human actions – of introducing modern ways that are contrary to safeguarding the environment. Modernity, although it comes with its own undeniable benefits, seems to stand in the way of the idea of protecting the sanctity of the environment.

In the selected poems of Stephen Kofi Okleme, he also highlights our urgent need to develop ecological consciousness to be able to appreciate the value we get from the natural environment as well as to acknowledge our reckless treatment of nature.

In his poem “Lone Maize,” the poet talks about a healthy maize that is planted and stands tall on the side of the Accra-Kumasi highway and the Ayigya Goil filling station road. The lyrical speaker recognizes the potential and the ability of the plant to bloom but is saddened at where the maize chose to sprout since on the roadside just anything can happen to distract and impede the growth of the lone maize. The poem first describes the place where the lone maize stands and its demeanor.

Besides the rusty lamp-post
On the narrow strip of green grass
Between the fast tarmac
Of the Accra-Kumasi Highway
And Ayigya Goil Filling Station
You stand firm like a soldier on guard
Your healthy stem and dark green leaves
Glittering in the morning dew
Are a delight to watch

Lone Maize

In the above lines, the poetic speaker intentionally gives space to setting for readers to know how the land has been encroached upon by the construction of the road and thus the only available space for the maize to sprout is ‘on the narrow strip of green grass.’ The use of the phrase ‘narrow strip’ shows how extremely inadequate the space in which the maize stands is and further reveals how considerable space is not given to plants to thrive. This is further confirmed by the shape of the green grass ‘strip.’ Regardless, the lone maize stands tall and firm. The use of a simile to compare the maize to a soldier on guard shows the thriving and unrelenting spirit of nature in the face of uncertainty and chaos. This is further revealed in its ‘healthy stem and dark green leaves’ that glitter. The use of the expression ‘glittering’ to describe the maize in the morning dew under the rusty lamp-post paints a vivid image of the beauty of the lone maize that shines bright in the reflecting posture of the lamp-post.

The persona smitten by the beauty of the lone maize further asserts that

For I am conscious of your value
I am aware that if you grow on an acre of land
With your kind, healthy and strong as you
You can bring pleasure to many hearts;
And even in your present state
You can yield rich cobs
To nourish at least a single soul

Lone Maize

The poet’s admiration for nature is heavily reflected in these lines. The use of the expression ‘conscious of your value’ makes us understand that the poetic speaker is aware of the benefits humans can derive from that lone maize especially if it is on an acre of land; it can feed a lot of people and even as a lone maize, it is capable of feeding at least an individual. The poetic speaker’s use of the word ‘nourish’ expresses the idea that nature nitrifies, sustains and is necessary for growth. This is why the poetic speaker is conscious of the lone maize’s value to humans.

The poem ends with the poet establishing the fact that the place where the plant stands is not good for its growth and its life span can be brought to an abrupt end due to the poor environmental conditions. This is made clear in the lines below:



But this environment makes you fragile
 Poor healthy plant!
 An articulator with a drunken driver
 Or a log falling off a timber truck
 Can crush into nothingness
 Both you and your lamp-post neighbour
 Alas! You are not in the right place
 You are a weed!
 And who in this world cares for weeds?

Lone Maize

The poet notes that the environment is inimical to the growth of the healthy plant. So, he mourns the unfortunate condition the plant is in. The use of the coordinate conjunction ‘but’ shows a shift in the argument of the poetic speaker. He gradually builds his readers’ interest in his love for the lone maize and nature in general only to indicate that the life of the lone maize is threatened by numerous environmental hazards. By alluding that either an articulator with a drunken driver or a log can easily fall off a timber truck and crush the lone maize, the persona indirectly paints a picture of violence that humans consciously or unconsciously inflict on nature and the environment. The last two lines of the poem mark the insignificance of the lone maize in its setting. The lone maize is nothing but a weed that is of no importance to anyone simply because of where it has been planted. The expression ‘You are a weed!’ carries an accusatory and insulting tone, the poet uses this expression to strategically undermine the value of the lone maize. The use of the rhetorical question further shows the neglect of the maize and underestimates the value of the plant and submerges its value under a huge pile of nothingness.

In the poem, “Amakom Flowers,” Okleme talks about how the beauty of nature has regenerative powers, relieves one of stress and burden and serves as healing to the soul of humans. The poem opens with how nature was once able to serve as a therapy for man. The poet notes that:

Once upon a Coleridgean ballad
 An ancient sailor unconsciously blessed
 Some slimy but attractive water snakes
 And got relieved of a bothersome burden

Amakom Flowers

In the first stanza of the poem, the poet employs the use of literary allusion to one of England’s finest writers – Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his poem “The Rime of Ancient Mariner,” where he recounts that the sight of beautiful sea snakes was able to take him out of his deep-seated misery. This idea of nature serving as a source of therapy and wealth to the soul of humans can also be sourced from William Wordsworth’s poem, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,” where the beauty of the flowers stays with the poet to the extent that he can simply revisit his memories to recollect his encounter with the daffodils whenever he is in a pensive mood. The memory alone is enough to change his mood and fills his heart with pleasure. Okleme employs this literary allusion not only to show the healing effect of nature but to establish that it is effective and to set the tone for the remaining stanzas of the poem.

Due to the healing and regenerative potential of nature, the poetic speaker sees it fit for humans to simply be in the presence of nature and gain this invaluable wealth. He expresses this idea in the lines below:

And so I come with this prescription
That in your moments of down-spiritedness
You may drive down the high way...
And begin to feed your eyes.

Amakom Flowers

The poetic speaker assumes the role of a medical practitioner by the use of the register, ‘prescription’ – to issue treatment for those in distress and anguish. The act of driving or walking by Amakom flowers, he believes is one of the ways of healing those who are ‘down-spirited.’ This regenerative potential of nature is seen as nature having the power to make one feel better emotionally, physically and spiritually.

The beauty of flowers is explored throughout the third to seventh stanzas of the poem. Their multiple-layered colors in different shapes, sizes and hues and how they are lined up both on the left and right side of the street is what captivates everyone. The Amakom Flowers are personified as young ladies who are ripe, plump and desirous. By the use of the word, ‘physiognomies’, it is observed that although these flowers are distinct, they still bear semblance with one another which makes them unique. The freshness and beauty of these flowers, the poet notes are

A sight as lovely and inspiring
As the birth of a new baby

Amakom Flowers

The comparison of flowers (nature) to a newly born baby gives the flowers a refreshing appeal and shows the close tender relationship that humans have with nature.

The last stanza of the poem reminds us again of the need to be in the presence of nature. This indirectly urges us also to protect nature to enable us to enjoy its presence. This is made clear in the following lines:

Admire them these Amakom flowers!
For admiration with no evil intent is no sin
It’s rather therapeutic and comforting
Producing restful sleep and celestial dream

Amakom Flowers

These lines take us back to the Coleridgean ballad, where nature in the form of water snakes relieves the sailor of all his burdens. The same healing benefit is expected to be derived by those who come into contact with these Amakom flowers. They will be comforted, relieved of their stress and sleepless nights and above all, enjoy dreams filled with bliss. The use of the word ‘celestial’ shows the spiritual impact in the healing of flowers and elevates nature above all other things.

In *Amakom Flowers*, Okleme brings us closer to nature in order for readers to appreciate and indulge in its brilliance and beauty and dissuade him from making either a conscious or unconscious attempt to destroy the ecology. In order to be able to enjoy the surreal presence of nature, it behooves humans to treat nature kindly without inflicting harm on it.

Conclusion

The paper has examined the ecocritical inscriptions in the poetry of Cecilia Sefa Amoafowaa and Stephen Kofi Okleme by looking at some of their poems, namely “Breaching the Silence Code,” “Modernity and its Reapings,” “Lone Maize” and “Amakom Flowers” that deal with nature and the environment. These poets focus on diverse issues of ecocriticism in their poems, human cruelty and incon-



siderateness towards nature, the implications of modernity on the ecosystem and above all, the need to be close to nature due to its regenerative potentials. The study revealed that the ecosystem is consistently under threat by the actions and inactions of humans and if this is not controlled and curbed, we stand the chance of losing all the benefits that we derive from nature such as its therapeutic qualities, its ability to clean the air we breathe, purify our water, produce food and medicine, reduce chemical and pollution and many others. By using ecocriticism, the study offers a refreshing perspective on African poetry and at the same time brings to fore pertinent environmental issues that are detrimental to our environment, thus raising ecological awareness among people.

REFERENCES

- Achebe 1965:** Achebe, C. *The Novelist as a Teacher. Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays 1987*.
- Ahmed, Hashim 2012:** Ahmed, H., Hashim, R. An Ecocritical Reading of Selected Poems of Muhammad Haji Salleh. – In *Malay Literature*, 1–17.
- Amoafowaa 2014:** Amoafowaa, C. *Poetry Excursion on an African Mind*.
- Barry 2002:** Barry, P. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester University Press.
- Buell 1995:** Buell, L. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau Nature Writing, and the formation of American Culture*. Cambridge: Mass and London: Harvard University Press.
- Glotfelty 2007:** Glotfelty, C. What is Ecocriticism . ASLE: The Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment.
- Glotfelty, C., Fromm, H. (Eds.). 1996:** *The Ecocriticism Readers: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press.
- Hawkins 2018:** Hawkins, M. Textual Analysis. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*.
- Mishra 2016:** Mishra, K. Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature. – In *BRICS Journal of Education Research*, 6(4), 168–170.
- Okleme 2003:** Okleme, S. *Reconciliation and other Poems*. Kumasi: Setsu Educational Books.
- Ruekert 1978:** Ruekert, W. Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism. – In *Iowa Review*, 9(1), 71–86.
- Slovic 2008:** Slovic, S. *Going Away to Think: Engagement, Retreat and Ecocritical Responsibility*. University of Nevada Press.
- Traore 2019:** Traore, M. An Ecocritical Reading of Selected Ghanaian Poems. – In *KENTE – Cape Coast Journal of Literature and Arts*, 74–89. doi:<https://doi.org/10.47963/jla.v1i1.87>
- Yeboah et al. 2022:** Yeboah, P. A., Otoo, P., Gyimah Manu, J., & Freitas, P. K. Grief and resilience live together: an assessment of arthur miller’s death of a salesman. – In *Celtic: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching, Literature and Linguistics*, 9(2), 205–218. doi:<https://doi.org/10.22219/celtic.v9i2.23114>



Appendix

Breaching the Silence Code

I

When the cotton bloomed
As it wished without danger
Of being loomed.
For the benefits of strangers
To their field,
There was silence!

II

When the trees soared
Up, up into the skies
Without the danger of being bored
About being turned into shelter, fire or dice
For the benefits of strangers
To their field,
There was silence!

III

When the earth was intact
Without piercy-woundings digging its treasured parts
And turning it in fact
Into many shiny parts
For the benefits of strangers
To their field,
There was silence!

IV

When the streams and rivers
Were only for the borrowing
Of coming into contact with many materials which are disgusting
There was silence!

V

When the moon, sun, stars and thunder
Owned the skies
And there were no intruders putting it asunder
Committing the sun to burn the beneathers who fry
In retaliation to show the strangers
That they are the bosses
There was silence!

VI

Now everything rebels
The animals talk back and walk
The trees shake their heads in defiance
The rivers and streams run at top speed roaring and crushing everything their way
The air curls and whispers in strange and fearful tones
The earth stretches and expands seizing many defaulters in her bosom
Everything points at the breaching of silence of the earth.



Modernity and its Reapings

It seems long ago when living was simple
Money, gold, diamonds and silver had no murderous hands in ruling
It seems long ago
When apparels were simple and the feet were best sources of leg protection
It seems long ago
When we breathed the scent of the earth without inhaling sickness
herbs can't cure
It seems long ago when dust was used for building and not blinding
It seems long ago when theories of headaches were not forced into poor heads
It seems long ago when fame was nothing to die for
It seems not long ago, long long ago
When politics was nothing but a word unknown
And peace ruled the earth
Now mouths are widely opened
Titled kings bow to their own shadows
As oversll bosses kneel to ascend godship prominence
To eventually kill beings like fowls for their buffet
With sharp machetes of greed

Lone Maize

Besides the rusty lamp-post
On the narrow strip of green grass
Between the fast tarmac
Of the Accra-Kumasi Highway
And Ayigya Goil Filling Station
You stand firm like a soldier on guard
Your healthy stem and dark green leaves
Glittering in the morning dew
Are a delight to watch
For I am conscious of your value
I am aware that if you grow on an acre of land
With your kind, healthy and strong as you
You can bring pleasure to many hearts;
And even in your present state
You can yield rich cobs
To nourish at least a single soul
But this environment makes you fragile
Poor healthy plant!
An articulator with a drunken driver
Or a log falling off a timber truck
Can crush into nothingness
Both you and your lamp-post neighbour
Alas! You are not in the right place
You are a weed!
And who in this world cares for weeds?



Amakom Flowers

Once upon a Coleridgean ballad
An ancient sailor unconsciously blessed
Some slimy but attractive water snakes
And got relieved of a bothersome burden

And so I come with this prescription
That in your moments of down-spiritedness
You may drive down the high way
Past Afful Nkwanta to Starlets’ street

Bear left stadiumwards at the traffic light
And begin to feed your eyes.
Edward Nasser on the crest
And begin to feed your eyes

To the left and to the right they appear
In varied shapes sizes and hues
Sporting fashionable multi-coloured clothes
And sauntering leisurely along.

Tall or short or big or small
With fair or coffee-coloured or jet-black skins
Rich crops of soft long hair
And broad shiny physiognomies

They may wave and address you “Blaa!”
Or provocatively wiggle their roundish behinds
A sight as lovely and inspiring
As the birth of a new baby

Heart-warming conversations and encouraging smiles
Are their exclusive preserves;
The perfumelike fragrance they exude
Exercising a hypnotic effect

Admire them. these Amakom flowers!
For admiration with no evil intent is no sin
It’s rather therapeutic and comforting
Producing restful sleep and celestial dream