

Eco-Aesthetics, Environmental Justice, and Social Transformation in Contemporary Nigeria

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Nigeria as a postcolonial state is changing, not only sociopolitically but also environmentally. The environmental transformation is tied to the social and political realities as they unfold. Nature in rural areas is experiencing rapid change because of what one might call structural modernity, brought about by government policies aimed at expanding modern infrastructure. Mineral mining and oil exploration, in the quest for national resources, have had dire consequences on the society. Since the twenty-first century, emerging Nigerian writers have increasingly paid attention to the fate of the environment in the face of modernity driven by a global logic of economy based on earth-derived resources (mining, exploration, excavation, etc.).

This project will examine how Nigerian writers represent environmental transformation in Nigeria in their works; their attitudes towards the social, political, and economic factors driving such transformation; and the cultural alternative they provide for pursuing a healthy relationship between humans and their environments. Primary texts will be drawn from the fiction of Helon Habila, Kaine Agary, and Aliyu Kamal; the poetry of Nnimmo Bassey, Denja Abdullahi, and Ebi Yeibo; the drama of Ahmed Yerima, Greg Mbajiorgu, and Isaac Attah Ogezi. This project aims to show how Nigerian writers, through literary aesthetics, contribute to efforts to transform Nigeria into an environmentally conscious society. While the study of literature and the environment is a relatively new field of research in Nigeria, there is increasing interest in it, and my research will be a modest contribution in this regard. The research will also impact on the national university teaching of humanities subjects, making a cogent case for the greater inclusion of environmental material in the humanities curriculum, and has the potential for outreach into local colleges and schools. Last but not least, it will benefit the Nigerian public in the expanded educational sense that it takes writers' contributions to environmental questions well beyond the immediate confines of their writing, thereby raising awareness of the urgent need to engage with pressing environmental issues in Nigeria, across the African continent, and in the entire world.