Poetry as language and ideological tool for environmental agitation: A stylistic study of *Tanure Ojaide* and *Benji Egede's* poetry

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Abstract
Previous studies on Tanure Ojaide and Benji Egede's poetry have concentrated on literary and linguistic features without paying adequate attention on the roles of linguistic-stylistic features that are crucial for the interpretation and description of their poetic discourse. This paper, therefore, examines poetry as language and ideological tool for environmental agitation in Tanure Ojaide's The Endless Song, The Beauty I Have Seen and Benji Egede's Testament of Hope and Songs of Fuellessness. The study reveals that poetry is a language and as well an ideological weapon aimed at unfolding the socio-political decadent of their time. From the poetic analysis, the study highlights the nature of discourse in the selected poetry in relation to social contexts, projecting what is communicated and how it is communicated. The theoretical approach adopted for this study is Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistic model which is concerned with the identification, description and explanation of textual features in a given discourse situation.
Keywords: Poetry, poetic discourse, language, social context, ideology

1.0 Introduction

The subject of environmentalism is significantly interspersing Nigerian poetry. Poets from the Niger-Delta are seen as champions in this trend. One sees such radical change in contemporary literature as a welcome development. Poets such as, John Pepper Clark, Gabriel Okara, Christopher Okigbo, were the earliest group of poets whose themes and idioms reflected the literatures produced in the region of the Niger Delta.

Their works depict literary ideologies of anti-imperialist. A similar ideology is detected in the works of modern writers from this region. They employ the power of creativity in order to expose the social rot and moral degradation in postcolonial Niger Delta .Their works show deep concern for their environment where there is intensive struggle against oppression and postcolonial slavery. Poets such as Ezenwa-Ohaeto, Tanure Ojaide, Onookome Okome, Chidi Anthony Opara, Sophia Obi, Angela Nwosu, Hope Eghagha, Benji Egede, Joe Ushie, Barine Saana, Ebi Yeibo, Ebinyo Ogbowei, Nnimmo Bassey amongst many others have done various collection on the discourse. Their poetry collections unfold diverse forms of blood trails and tragedies that engulf the region.

However, this is not to say that all the poets from this region seek to write with the same critical idiom, scourging voice, or with the same displaced voice or tenor as necessitated by the ugly situation that the region finds itself. Obviously, they all have their different approaches towards ecological crises, demystifying their poetry through the simplification of language. Essentially, a poet's ability to weave his environment or landscape into his artistic creation lies in his innovative use of language. A poet's style is the product of his linguistic habit. That habit in turn, is strongly conditioned by the poet's social, cultural and ideological environment. The environment has been described as one of the liveliest and topical issues of our day, and the Niger Delta environment is such a pathetic one with absolute devastation. (Onduku, 2001)

Ejobowah (2000) holds that the region hosts a dozen of multinationals and also produces what accounts for 80 percent of Nigeria's annual revenue. As a result of the destructive impact of oil exploration and upstream activities in the region since the 1960s, the entire environment has been severely devastated. What obtain in the Niger Delta are a fight for national identity and a quest for self determination by an oppressed postcolonial people who seek for a means of liberation and meaningful identity. Thus, this war for emancipation from the avaricious hold of the government and multinationals has not only trailed in the grip of militancy but also attracted polemic literary

responses. The essence and trajectory is to bring a radical change in the region's political spheres.

Ojaide (1996: 23) remarks that in "modern African poetry as in traditional African songs, there is the focus on current socio-political issues that affect the poet's people." Darah (2008) asserts that the radicalization of the political space of the Niger Delta has affected the works of writers, thinkers, activists and cultural mediators. In trying to build a great society that we all aspire, literary writers play a significant role, holding a very crucial position in the creation of literary works that will meet the requirement of the society, especially, the long aged problem of leadership. Hence, the writer's response arises naturally to such barrier that is plaguing his environment. Poetry, for instance, if it must be relevant, must be constructed in such a way that it is lucid enough, unfolding the environment, its meaning and representation in language.

Poetry is a form of literature that uses language in a special form. It is the expression of intense feelings in a very special way. The very existence of poetry depends on representing some aspects of language in a new way and creating new images of reality which do not exist through the use of language. (Edem, 2016) As a discourse, it focuses on how the works of poets are drawn from all circles of life and other discursive sources that they read or hear and observe which later culminate into patterns of language. It is this pattern of language that engages the reader, questioning its meaning, form, style and effect. For instance, Nwagbara (2010) establishes that Ojaide's poetry negates ecological imperialism, a capitalist practice that destroys the periphery's natural world. The same applies to Egede's poetics. His works depict literary ideologies of anti- capitalist. In other words, Ojaide and Egede's poetic discourses accentuate much on struggle and resistance.

More significantly, a foray into their works demonstrates that poetry is a veritable instrument that could be used to contest power, thereby, resisting any form of subjugation, particularly ecological capitalism. This mechanic of power relations between the Nigerian states and the Deltan has indeed opened up a form of environmental

literature which constitutes the poetic canvas of literary writing from this region; hence one finds this graphic distillation of environmental and ecological dissonance often created by Tanure Ojaide and Benji Egede in all their poetry. Their poetic resurgences beam hope in the face of the hopeless, defenseless and the neglected as they champion the crusade against ecological acrimony, globally. Poetry becomes a medium of language and ideological tool to the reaction of social, political and personal experiences and as well as to arouse public concern about the prevailing situations in the Delta-----oppression, pain, suffering, poverty dehumanization, and brutality.

Language, as one knows is a social tool for the construal of meaning and ideology; however, previous studies on Tanure Ojaide and Benji Egede's poetry have not paid adequate attention on the roles of linguistic and stylistic features that are crucial for the interpretation and description of their poetic discourse. Shija (2008), Nwagbara (2010), Bassey (2011), Alu and Suwa (2012), Sadek (2013), amongst others have examined the poetic discourse of Tanure Ojaide, projecting his resistance mechanisms from literary perspectives without adequate recourse to the functional roles of linguistic choices in his eco-critical poetry. The same applies to Oha's (1999a), (1999b), (1999c) and Ehiemua's (1999) linguistic approach on Egede's poetic discourse. While carrying out analyses on the selected poetic texts, they are expected to have explicated in details the configuration of language used in the realization and presentation of the socio- political spheres. Hence, this deters the reader from appreciating Egede's linguistic stock and his poetic commitment to eco-critical discourse.

It is from this perspective that the present study examines poetry as language and ideological tool for environment agitation in the poetry of Tanure Ojaide *The Endless Song* (1989) *The Beauty I Have Seen: A Trilogy* (2010); and Benji Egede's *Songs of Fuellessness* (1998a), and *Testament of Hope* (1998b) in order to examine how they have used their creative works to condemn societal ills; with the hope of raising moral consciousness among the members of the society. The selected poems are subjected to descriptive, linguistic and critical analyses using M.A.K.

Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistic model (SFL). The linguistic model is chosen for this study because it pays adequate attention to how language works in texts and contexts. Its theoretic principle is that language is a social semiotic system or network of systems and that every communicative act involves choices from a describable set of options for the construction of meaning. (Halliday, 1985) The model provides an in-depth analysis on both linguistic and literary levels by authenticating context with the supporting linguistic components in the text, thereby, unveiling a better understanding of the constructions of meaning in the discourse. This is what this present study hopes to achieve from a stylistic perspective.

Stylistics proves to be much alive and well formidable towards the exploration of texts. Simpson (2004) avers that stylistics as a method of inquiry has an important reflexive capacity to shed light on the very language system it derives from. Timucin, (2010) remarks that stylistic analysis of texts focuses on the workings of language in literature and on the development of confidence towards the systematic interpretations of literary texts. For Crystal and Davy (1969), the aim of stylistic is to analyse language with the intention of identifying linguistic features associated with the text and to explain why such features have been used. Wales (2001:437-8) opines that stylistics is concerned with the description of the formal features of texts and the functional significance of these features in relation to the interpretation of the texts.

2.0 Textual analysis of Tanure Ojaide and Benji Egede's poetry

This study will take into account some linguistic-stylistic features towards the interpretations of the selected poetic texts, showcasing how poetry is language and ideological tool for environmental agitation. It hopes to showcase how poetry arouses public concern towards environmental depravity and acrimony.

2.1 Phonological pattern

Phonology studies the sound pattern of a given language. In examining the phonological features of Tanure Ojaide's and Benji

Egede's poetic texts, the focus is on significant phonological features, describing their delicate and deliberate combination in the representations of events in the Delta, projecting their effect and meaning.

1. **Alliteration**

This is the repetition of the same consonant letter at the beginning of words in a linguistic structure. Tanure Ojaide and Benji Egede seem to have much penchant for this. For Tanure Ojaide, consider the following selected texts.

1) In my search, snakes slithered past poisoning no friendly feet.
petals opened to me the brightness in all cheered by daylight
from this distance across the fires of capital, new affluence I
remember the multi-ethnic population of small ones for whom I
was a provider of proven cure, a blessed healer for all that the
forest once gave me I sing this said song
[Lamentations of the Herbalist (75) *The Beauty I Have Seen*]

It is certain that the Delta has a special appeal to Tanure Ojaide, the vegetation, the evergreen, the heavy rain and so on. But things became complicated by the coming of the oil companies or multinationals. This unhappy shift is what Tanure Ojaide tries to explicate in the poem "Lamentations of the Herbalist". He unfolds a violent exploitation by the multinational aided by the very elites of the land. His linguistic and stylistic use of alliteration in the poem unveils this transition of the Delta from a land of green into decay, a landscape where the leaves usually serve as herbs, curing all manner of illness. Tanure Ojaide's poetic ideology and language reveals itself in his choice of perfect bonding of the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/, the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/, and the voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ in the text.

In "Wafi, My Incontestable Love", Tanure Ojaide uses the alliterative structures to create a picture of a town in absolute neglect. The use of the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/, the voiced alveolar plosive /d/

and the voiceless glottal fricative /h/ interlace to vividly represent this negligence of the Niger Delta environment.

(2) Wafi is saturated with prayers, soaked in tears:
p̲ain p̲aints the streets with harsh colour
a nightmarish sun and depressed moon
The poor d̲oomed in abysmal d̲ebt and d̲enials
every d̲ay h̲eld h̲ostage to impossible d̲emands

["Wafi, My Incontestable Love" (16), *The Beauty I Have Seen*]

The voiceless bilabial /p/ captures the height of the torture experienced by the people. The phoneme exposes the level of devastation. The use of the voiced alveolar plosive /d/ in the lines reinforces the noun group 'The poor'. It showcases the level of wickedness and negligence of the ruling class over the ruled. The situation is well captured by the reader and as well sustained through the use of the phoneme /d/ and /h/ which knit the text. The sounds sustain the sad remarks of the speaking voice.

In Benji Egede's poetry, there are various phonological patterns that are consistent in the texts. Like Tanure Ojaide, Benji Egede deploys alliterative sound patterns to project and reinforce the message of oppression, suffering, revolt, inequality and so on. To Egede, sound as a linguistic and stylistic tool, lends completeness to the passage of his poetic discourse. Consider the selected poems below:

(3) All seeing Nkunlunkulu
just to remind you that
the Dores and the Barres
the Amins and the Abachas
in our house
have furnished m̲ultiple m̲attocks and hoes
for grave diggers use
like the s̲tarving S̲omalians
the d̲ead burying their own d̲ead
why all this d̲og -eat-d̲og –madness?

[":A Note to Nkunlunkulu"(31), *Songs of Fuellessness*]

"A Note to Nkunlunkulu" projects Egede's appalling art imaged in 'Nkunlunkulu', a Zulu name for God. In this poem, there is a combination of the bilabial nasal /m/, initial consonants of the voiceless alveolar fricative of the sibilant /s/ and the voiced alveolar plosive /d/ to establish an alliterative bond--/m/ + /s/ + /d/ . The alliterative sounds underscore the message of oppression and tyranny conveyed in the poem. Benji Egede's lamentation is as a result of the intricate situation in the Niger Delta region. The reincarnation of such despot rulers epitomized in the images of the 'Does', 'Barres', 'Amins' and 'Abachas' triggers an atmosphere of fear and terror.

Of course, the problems in the region erode the people's confidence in the leadership, and as such, under this circumstance, Egede must fulfill his role as a voice by raising an alarm to the one who can deliver absolutely from such aching misery of 'dog –eat- dog- madness'. With this, he educates the reader on the essential of the socio-cultural and metaphysical place of God in modern African poetry. However, the repetition of the sibilant /s/ in 'Dores', 'Barres', 'Amins', 'Abachas', 'mattocks', 'hoes' and 'Somalians' is to furnish the text with some level of density.

In "For the Patriot", one captures an environment characterized by atrocity. The alliterative synergy proves to be significant in the combination of the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/, voiceless dental fricative /ð /, the voiced bilabial plosive /b/ and the voiced bilabial nasal / m/--- /s/ + /ð/ + /b + /m/. The phoneme /s/ for instance, unveils the setting (time), /b/ suggests a picture of blackness, gloom and sadness. The sound /ð/ intensifies the ugly situation, and /m/ projects the heartlessness. Such linguistic and stylistic creativity of the blend of the phonemes heightens the events. The painting of the gory situation of the event carries so much weight in the phonemes.

(4) Sunday, that black sunday
The blackness of that black Sunday For you, Samora and Dele,
Crusaders of peace and truth murdered by mindless men
["To the Patriots"(43) *Songs of Fuellessness*]

(ii) Rhymes

A rhyme is a repetition of similar sounds in two or more words, often in corresponding positions within one or more lines of a poem. The use of rhyme by Ojaide and Egede underscores the dilapidated state of the Niger Delta environment. Rhyme elevates the mood and meaning of their poems. For Ojaide, consider the following:

(5) The elders advise us to wait till we grow old
wow, wait for their privileges till we are told

the politicians tell us to wait till their second term
hurray, wait for property till after we elect them
the dreamers teach us to watch till they wake
yes, wait till they make it to another break
they always ask us to keep on waiting all the time
yes, learn from them to wait out an entire lifetime
["Waiting"(50), T*he Beauty I have Seen*]

In "Waiting", one recognizes Tanure Ojaide's deliberate effort in drawing one's attention to particular words that are fundamental to the context. His voice seems cynical over those leaders who make mockery out of the people. The repetition of the lexical item 'wait' is foregrounded to unveil the height of negligence which the Niger Delta people are subjected to. Stylistically, the foregrounding effect of the rhyme enables the poet to heighten the cynicism embedded in the proposition of these mockers. Words such as 'old' and 'told' share the same syntactic and phonological feature. Phonologically, they are

+ monosyllabic + phoneme /əu/ [as end rhyme]
Syntactically, they are positional equivalent,
till we grow old /uəld/ till we are told /tuəld/

The same applies to the other lines. Phonologically, 'term' and 'them' are: + monosyllabic + phoneme /ə/ [as end rhyme.]
Phonologically, 'wake' and 'break' are:

+ monosyllabic + phoneme /ei/ [as end rhyme.]
The last couplet has a shift in its syllabic structures. However, what Ojaide strives to achieve is an interlocking rhyme, in 'time 'and' 'lifetime'. Phonologically, there is an interface of mono and disyllabic structures.
time ---------- monosyllabic; lifetime -------- disyllabic
But phonemically, they are equivalent:
time /taim/ -------- /ai/ lifetime /laivetaim/----- /ai/

In "On a New Year's Eve 2006", depicts the agony and torture meted on the people, so painful that the poet wails. The position of the rhyme pattern is at the end of the beginning of each word that starts every line of the poem. Tanure Ojaide is actually conscious of this. The stylistic effect is to bring to the fore the scotching state of the Niger-Delta people and to create a cohesive bond in the group structure and also to reinforce the syntactic connection between 'treating',' clearing', 'breaking', 'giving' and 'burying' with the phoneme /ŋ/. The rhyme exposes the height of insensitivity of the oppressors' inhuman act as well as the crippled state of the poet's environment. While the oppressors rejoice in the euphoria of callousness, the poet and his entire community continue to treat a painful but bearable disease with fatal infections. All the lexical items share the same phonemes that are phonologically parallel. Phonologically, they are:
+ disyllabic + phoneme /ŋ/

(6) Treating a painful but bearable disease with fatal inflections
clearing impurities from the street with a mudslide
breaking the stick meant to bent into bow
drowning the dirty child in a pool instead of washing with a bucket
giving a preordained verdict before the trial's done
burying the sick instead of allowing the patient to go either way
["On a New Year's Eve 2006"(76), *The Beauty I Have Seen*]

The power of satire is obviously not to be avoided in the exploration of texts. Egede's "Roll Call" is an attack or a campaign against NEPA Plc for its colossal frustration of power on the citizenry with their heartless electricity outage. Power, within the ambience of this nation is a sorry situation. The versification throws up a core dialectics which showcases NEPA as an enterprise of colossal waste.

(7) NEPA plc, father
here are the children
low power
no power
clever
damper

All in all for father and children
in a verse of rhyme:
always hope for low power
sometimes at best no power
but don't expect
in every respect
the clever NEPA
to perform never
because it is a faceless monster
that proffers damper instead of answer
["Roll Call"(56), *Testament of Hope*]

The structural pattern of "Roll Call" is dulcet, euphonious and satirical. Through it, one captures Egede's subtle campaign against NEPA. Of course, with the intercourse of oil and gas activities in the region of the Niger-Delta, one expects that the problem of power should have been resolved. However, this is not the case in spite of the transition. Triggered by this agony and frustration, Egede, in this poem pushes to the fore by exposing the organization for its frustration of power on the citizenry. The poem is easy to access because of its

interplay with rhyme and humour,. The rhymes capture NEPA as an enterprise of frustration and colossal waste.

The text is built on the aesthetic agglomeration of the repetition of the phoneme /ə / as end rhyme in lines 1,2,3,4,5 & 6 of stanza 1 and lines 1,3,4,, 7, 8 9 and 10 of stanza 2, /e/ in lines 5 and 6 of stanza 2.The sounds are indeed suggestive of the subject matter explicating the whole idea of Beard's (2003:3) assertion that language and meaning work together not separately. See Egede's use of metaphor in line 9, stanza 2, evoking the seriousness of the context. In stanza 1, all the lines are phonologically: + disyllabic + phoneme /ə/
Stanza 2, lines 1,3,4,7, 8,9,and 10 are phonologically:

+ disyllabic
+ phoneme /ə /

Lines 5 and 6 of stanza 2 are: + disyllabic
+ phoneme /e/

2.2 Verb pattern

Tanure Ojaide and Benji Egede also make use of verb patterns in their poetry. Verb plays a vital role in any syntactic organization. This is because it connotes action. For example, Tanure Ojaide's "Measuring Time" depicts verbs used imperatively. The verbs are constructed in such a way that they are active and issue orders, by application; they demand some actions by way of response. These include 'listen', 'strike' and 'fill'. In addition to expressing command and request, they indicate unhappy shift. Ojaide is unhappy because of the devastation and the ruin that have befallen his environment. The verbs are structured to create or give urgent attention to the problem facing the land. The stylistic effect is to indicate the exigency of the situational context.

VGP
(8) listen I am bereft of great things
VGP
strike me a note equally to my mind,
VGP

fill this arena of gloom with transparent words
outside the face the sun dresses with decorous mask.
["Measuring Time"(28) *The Endless Song*.]

In "On Poverty Day 2008", the verbs are also actively constructed. Ojaide's intention is to attract the attention of the reader to the crisis of the discourse. The verbs 'dispense', 'strike', 'cut', 'behead', lockjaw' and delete are used as heads. Hence, the lexical words 'dispense with', 'strike dumb', 'cut down', 'behead those' and so on are rhetorically expressed to capture vividly layers of conflict crystallised by revolution and violence. The verbs are harsh and persuasive in the context of usage. Largely, the verbs are stylistically structured in such a way that they make an urgent demand if the land must be free from oppression and despotism. The word 'hammer' as used by the poet in the context refers to opportunists who seize every opportunity to be rich, and that involves stealing and corruption. To Ojaide, there has to be massive deaths to conceive the beautiful ones.

(9) VGP
Dispense with representatives and pastors
of walking barebones

VGP
Strike dumb chanters of prayers
preying on frail flesh

VGP
cut down elders leading backwards
to the stone age that breaks backbones
VGP
delete the anthem of hammer*
from the lips of desperadoes
VGP
lockjaw to preachers of prosperity

to folks without faith in humanity
["On Poverty Day, 2008"(121),*The Beauty I Have Seen*]

For Egede, the range of verbal forms in his poetry varies. The poem "For the Unknown Plane Crash Victims" unveils trajectory of wickedness. Like an elegy, it depicts the ugly incident which took place at Ejigbo, Lagos in 1992 where crew of intelligent majors selected from different regions were intentionally killed in an air craft. The event was a disaster that affected families across the entire nation. The verbs in the text are dynamic. They expose the poet's unhappy disposition over such callous act spear- headed by villains who are the actors of the crime.

(10) …
oh the cry of children
could check those boisterous bangs
and give life a change.

Upon all these take stock, brothers
VGP
count the cost of modern science
feel the curse of modern science
measure the loss in human lives...
VGP
then gobble the news on a
pinch of alligator pepper and ask:
["For the Unknown Plane Crash Victims" (50),*Testament of Hope]*]

"New Songs" captures and represents scene of workers who are critical in their denunciation of injustice. This is noted in stanza 1, where Egede employs the present tense form of the verb to achieve a rhetorical feat by gradually leading his audience to what the content of his text is. The last line in stanza 1 indicates a verb pattern that is constructed in a question form. It projects the dejection and hopelessness in the region. Stanza 2 uses intermittent VGP question form to seek the listener's response and arrest his attention to the aching situation. The

song ordered by the persona in the text is a song to fight oppression. This is further ascertained in the contrast 'sour songs' and heightened in his words 'odd seasons' clinched by a VGP interrogative form that ends the poem in the last line of stanza 2. Egede's stylistic use of the VGP is to present a rhetorical situation which also demands a rhetorical response.

VGP
(11) Loud are the voices
stale are the songs
VGP
will the ship ever berth
this fourth season?
VGP
The ship workers are anxious
VGP
waiting earnestly
hoping fervently
sing to me new songs
will the ship ever berth?
VGP
sing to me new songs
not sour songs that killed this road
["New Songs" (21) *Testament of Hope]*]

2.3 Foregrounding

This is an intention violation of the scheme by means of which an item is brought into artistic emphasis. Halliday (1973) has characterized this as motivated prominence. He sees it as "the phenomenon of linguistic highlighting whereby some features of the language of a text stand out…" Here, we consider foregrounding as:

(i)Metaphor

Ojaide and Egede deliberately deploy this language trope in their poetry to create prominence. In "Ploughing the Wilderness", Tanure

Ojaide allegorically depicts the region of the Niger Delta as a piece of land that interests every individual because of its oil richness. Here, he refers metaphorically to the land of the rich oil Niger-Delta region as 'the calabash of their wishes', 'the crop they planted in the wilderness' and 'the expected produce of their prayers.' Ojaide's poetry often present the Niger-Delta as a region in which the physical degeneration and rot in social life integrate. Ojaide sees the hilarious and gratified desires of the leaders as mean, selfish and hypocritical.

(12) I am the calabash of their wishes, the crop
they planted in the wilderness.
I am the expected produce of their prayers--
looking at me they are gratified at their labour
giving way to congratulatory hallelujahs.
["Ploughing the Wilderness"(15),*The Endless Song*]

To Ojaide, the liberation of the Niger-Delta from such clutch of tyranny is through a revolution as depicted in the following lines:

It will take me revolutions to grow above normal size, it
takes a crossbreeding of genes to surpass seasonal crops,

In the poem, "A Toy God", Tanure Ojaide incorporates a metaphor of mockery which fuses into pain and agony. It exposes diverse nefarious activities in the region of the Niger-Delta. The metaphor 'I am a relic of infant days,' indicates the level of mockery, while the structure 'people say, a toy god' illuminates the height of humiliation that the region has been subjected to.

(13) They caught me naked in a passionate moment,
I am a relic of infant days, people say, a toy god.
["A Toy God" (51), *The Endless Song*]

The poem "Confession" is psycho-dramatic in its entirety. Egede in this verse takes the role of a psychoanalyst investigating the interaction of the

subconscious of the persona. This is called 'mind style' invented by Fowler (1977). It is used to identifying how a character's worldview is presented in a narrative". This is an aspect of the ideational meaning component of poetry. Benji Egede's ideological framework here unveils to the reader how wishes of terror develop inside of man when placed side by side with the nefarious problems of bad leadership in the region of the Niger- Delta. In this poem he tries to portray 'the quest for power' as a thought running in the mind of the persona. Such technique connects the semantic and psychological effects of the representation of experience in poetry. The metaphors arrayed in this poem include "I am siren", high priest of waildom", while 'the elephant' in the context is impliedly used. The images are used to aid the reader's intuitive understanding of the text. They metaphorically express terror, depicting the kind of leader the speaking voice will be when he eventually succeeds of his ploy. To show the seriousness of the discourse, the whole poem is constructed in italics.

(14) *I am siren*
high priest of waildom
a foil to serene ambience
my ditties are fronts
for all time terrors:
dangling whips
boisterous boots
bloody batons
I am siren
while I ride on power
I build giddy kingdoms of fear
I am siren
impatient naughty child
on mother's back
Paaanh... paaaanh...paaaaanh...
The elephant must not miss his way.

["Confession"(63), *Testament of Hope*]

(ii) Neologism/ nonce formation

This is considered in linguistics as the invention of new item. The poem, "The Day's Resolve" revolves around Tanure Ojaide's resolution of resistance to ecological capitalism. His poetic resilience here proves, essentially, to be eroded with outright resolve to fight back the enemy referred in the poem as 'halfnose', 'halfeye', and 'halfeverything'. The words are cacophonically coined to humiliate the political leaders.

(15) then as a lizard I can kill the elephant.
or a bush rat main the provocative leopard,
if I invoke the god that irregularly haunts my heart

I have to barter delicacies for steel;
my heart will turn its back on every bitch
I will never retreat
even if I see the halfnose, halfeye, the halfeverything…
I will kick the monster in the face
["The Day's Resolve" (31), *The Endless Song*]

In the poem "A Song of Zobiawalare", Egede symbolically exposes the plight of the majority of the citizen in the region who had been denied of their humanity due to the callousness and insensitivity of those in power over the years. The lexical item **"zobiawalare"** is coined by the poet from five syllables of the following Nigerian Languages: Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and Edo to suit the context. It showcases a land in total disarray.

(16) Where are the farmhands
Zobiawalare
the toiling baboons
Zobiawalare
the majors deserted
Zobiawalare
amputees in travails

Zobiwalare
they re coming
they' re coming
the vermins must leave
Zobiawalare
the king must hear
Zobiawalare
ten percenters
[" A Song of Zobiawalare"(50), *Songs of Fuellessness*]

Imageries such as 'farmhand', 'toiling baboon', 'the major deserted', and 'amputees' connote harshness on the people and callousness on the part of the leaders. See the poet's use of metaphor, labelling the oppressors as 'vermins' and 'ten percenters'. These images connote callousness at its peak. The illocutionary force of the modal verb 'must' in the text works on the psyche of the reader. Pragmatically, it exposes the assertive nature of the text.

(iii) Symbolism

In "A Kind of Blessing" Ojaide recaptures the Delta landscape as an environment under siege. The images of locusts, termites' and 'tormentors' are appropriately linked with a landscape that has been brought to total ruin. The images symbolize the capitalists---the oil companies and the Nigerian states. The poem projects a mood of lamentation and an atmosphere that is chaotic.

(17) Locusts have ruined our crops and brought hunger
still, in their nomadic life they are freer than many.
termites continue to bring hardship, they only eat
what belongs to others
….
Tormentors live, feeling impregnable in their hearts,
they live with the same blood they poison;
["A Kind of Blessing"(53), *The Endless Song*]

In "To the Foetus", Egede's artistic ideology is brought to the fore. Here, the Niger Delta is symbolically conceptualized through the use of a sensual image. The womb is conceptualized as an environment in sharp contrast with the region he finds himself. His imperative idea anchors a complete distrust for his environment referred to as 'our mismanage factory' due to inherent social and environmental degeneracy.

(18) The Salem city of the womb
is no brewery for sorrows
so stay another nine
….
here there's no bread
because there are profuse bakers
of lies and ideas
in our mismanage factory
so, stay another nine..
["The Foetus" (39), *Testament of Hope*]

(iv) Parallelism

Parallelism in a text is identified as structural repetition in which variable elements occur. It is deployed for emphasis. As a foregrounding device, parallelism is highly effective; it is evocative and gives a haunting force to the reader's feeling of what is being represented. For Tanure Ojaide, parallelism is deployed not just for the purpose of intensification but for the urgency and immediacy of his messages. The poem "You Don't Have to Be" is skillfully constructed to illustrate a simple but touchy message. The foregrounded rhetoric in the text 'you don't have to be' with the structure **SPC** is pragmatically informing. It is used to set a tone against the oppressors who do not have any iota of feelings for humans and their environment.

Stylistically, Tanure Ojaide uses the structure to draw up a parallel between human and non- human, between sensitivity and insensitivity. Lines 1 and 3 have the same structural pattern, only 'line 5' seems to be a bit different with the invention of the adverb 'just' to reinforce his proposition. Lines 2, 4, and 6, are of the same structural

pattern serving complementary functions. In addition to its emphatic function, Ojaide also deploys syntactic parallelism to establish the mood, tone and atmosphere of his discourse.

(19) You don't have to be Jewish
to shiver at the night of Auschwitz

you don't have to be black
to feel the agony and shame of slavery

you just have to be human
to know the plight of others.
[You Don't Have to Be" (146) *The Beauty I Have Seen*]

The same applies to the poem "The Battle". Here, the rhetorical function is in the syntax and in the tonal arrangement of the text. The fronting of the prepositional group in the structure at the beginning of the first line of every pair unveils to the reader quickly the reason why the poet and his people are taking a stance against every form of environmental injustice in the region. Hence the structure of the poem is **ASPC** with respect to enjambment. The stylistic effect of the parallel pattern is to create contextual analogies that will draw the reader into a logical conclusion. His proposition is logical because at the end of the context, the reader is able to comprehend the poet's use of such parallel structure. The idiom in the text is pragmatically informing. As a typical characteristic of parallel patterns, each item in each pattern reveals variation of its elements for the purpose of emphasis.

(20) For fear of exposing its soft body
the *Oghighe* plant covers itself with thorns,
for fear of bad company
the *Okpobriski* keeps distance from other trees,
For fear of our lives
we arm in diverse ways
to fight the same battle
["The Battle" (44), *The Endless Song*]

In Benji Egede's poetry, the parallel patterns identified, classified and analysed are based on syntactic arrangement that is strikingly reinforced by strategic placement. In "Aboh Bye-way", the parallel structures are eye catchy because of the manner of presentation. Benji Egede deploys sentence inversion as variation of textual presentation to logically present his content. The anaphoric referent 'they' at the end of the poem ascertains the structural pattern to be inversely. This structural presentation is heightened by the mechanism of parallelism. The parallelism is further foregrounded by the graphological arrangement of the protrusion of NGPs in the entire text. This parallel formulaic of repetition and structural equivalence provides the poem with a certain rhythmic power that cascades into a crescendo mood of sadness in respect of what the poet has witnessed in the landscape of the Niger Delta.

The poem captures the nemesis of a neglected Niger Delta environment and the utter agonizing condition of the inhabitants of the oil rich Niger-Delta region. Benji Egede's subtle projection of the ecological degradation and derelict situation of the region is captured in all subtlety through parallelism couched in simple imageries of raw courtesy, nocturnal beings, thorny canes, cold encounter of tse-tse, feet of clay soil, etc. The pattern of projection lies in the structure **mmhq** in line 1, 2, & 4 while line 6 has the **mhq** as in 'the lake of oil exploited.'

(21) The raw courtesy of rural folks,
the sonorous voices of birds
and nocturnal beings,
the cold encounter of tse-tse…
the lake of oil exploited
and yet uncase for
they all welcome us.
[Aboh Bye-way* (1) *Songs of Fullessness*]

Part of what constitutes Egede's poetry is his eccentric usage of syntax. In "Warning", a close examination shows that the poem is a quick response to the unceasing hitch, pain, acrimony, violation, repression,

suppression and killings that have plagued the region for so many years. Hence, Egede, prophetically envisages counter repression because the people of the land can no longer take the insolence any further. What he sees coming is a trail of resistance primed in combative action against reactionary forces, more directly. The parallel pattern in stanza 1 establishes the mood of the poem, while that of stanza 2 sets in a tone of revolt summing up the entire situation. The last stanza is projected in such a way that it poses no difficulty to the reader through the definitional metaphor. Stanza 1 has the structural pattern **SPCA** while stanza 2 has

S P C structures. As proven by consistent poetic proposition, it is obvious that all the elements fused by Egede in his creation of mood, tone and atmosphere in his poetry really meet with some expectations of fulfillment for the reader. The lines are magnificently and stylistically arrayed for easy comprehension.

(22) I can see red in weary eyes
that sing the plight…
I can see red in rags and tatters
that crown our greatness
…
I can see red in the land
red-fresh marks our way

Red is freedom
red is great
red is multi-colour
red kills to save.

["Warning" (30) *Testament of Hope*]

The poem showcases poetry as a functional, aesthetic and ideological tool for environmental agitation. Egede's advocacy is against despotism. And to him, someday these tyrants will certainly meet their waterloo. So far, the study has reflected the principles of Halliday's theory in the analysis of the selected poetic text. This is evident in our attempt of the exploration of the language potentialities. Attention was on the extraction

of some linguistic and stylistic components from the selected poetic texts, unveiling the meaning they carry as well as their aesthetic values.

3.0 Conclusion

From the analysis above, it is obvious that poetry serves as a language and as well an ideological tool for environmental agitation. Tanure Ojaide's and Benji Egede's poetic discourse deployed diverse linguistic and stylistic choices that capture the gory picture of the Niger Delta environment. Their poetry employs figures of sounds that vividly capture tyranny and oppression. Rhetorical expressions are knotted in verbal constructs that explicitly capture diverse atmosphere of gloom and layers of conflict crystallised by revolution and violence. The causticity and poignancy of their contextual discourse are also couched in foregrounded vignettes such as metaphors, symbols, neologisms and parallelisms that evoke terror and as well as capture the decadence of the flora and fauna of an idyllic landscape under the devastating exploitation of oil capitalists.

Tanure Ojaide and Benji Egede's poetic discourse ideologically denote a tradition of outrage against injustice, repression, exploitation and environmental disaster in the Niger-Delta region. This is captured through the linguistic and stylistic choices deployed by both poets to denounce social malaise in the region. The study shows that art, as a product of social dynamics is essentially committed to practical social realities, and poetry, to Tanure Ojaide and Benji Egede, is a veritable vehicle for political mediation and social control. Their poetic texts as revealed in the analysis are infused with social consciousness. Their concepts on the Niger Delta landscape generally conjure in the reader some sort of sensibilities towards how good living is measured within the domain of the region. Tanure Ojaide's and Benji Egede's poetry provide great insights into the question of capitalists' despoliation and their unusual cleavage in the region of the Delta with great propensity.

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