Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

Post-colonial Eco-criticism and Shades of Environmental Perceptions in the Conflict Spectrum

Onyechigoziri Chikere*
Ph.D
Department of English Language and Literature,
Abia State University, Uturu
P.M.B 2000, Uturu,
Abia State.

ABSTRACT

Environmental perception is etched in ecological psychology and describes how individuals experience bonds that are predicated upon some high sense of reliance and confidence in a place. Although African scholars and critics have used environmentally-skewed approaches to examine their post-colonial experiences, the bulk of these engagements has revolved around the environmental impact of oil in African oil producing states as if the oil crisis is the only complicit factor in environmental despoliation on the continent. Incidentally, issues emanating from the conflict spectrum, like wars and violent uprisings, contribute significantly to the myriad of environmental challenges in Africa but have not received adequate engagement in the existing literature. Not many scholars have fore-grounded purposive environmental perspectives to war/conflict narratives. Few writers have considered the scope of related physical, psychological, spiritual, and emotional dislocations to human-nature interactions manifesting as consequences of violence in conflict situations. Thus, this study adopts the qualitative analytical method and highlights the disruptive tendencies of conflict using Agbasimalo's *Roses and Bullets* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Relying on the tenets of Huggan and Tiffin' strand of Post-colonial Eco-criticism, the study depicts the extent to which the far-reaching ills of the conflict spectrum can, beyond the physical destruction of the biosphere, sever place attachment bonds, desecrate the spiritual essence of spaces, invalidate the emotional and psychological import of human-nature interactions and dislocate human-nature relations in irreversible ways. The study traces the dialectics of place attachment and displacement in eco-critical discourse.

Keywords: *Conflict, human-nature relations, place attachment and displacement environmental perception, person dimension, place dimension, function dimension, place-continuity referent and sense of belongingness.*

Introduction

* Author: Onyechigoziri Chikere
Email: onyechikere@gmail.com https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9653-2813
Received 11 Oct. 2024; Accepted 16 Oct. 2024. Available online: 25 Oct. 2024.
Published by SAFE. (Society for Academic Facilitation and Extension)

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

Like other critical theories, Eco-criticism developed from social and historical experiences of the Western world, especially American historical traditions; the original tenets were heavily influenced by nature writing and deep ecology. As scholars developed and expanded eco-criticism, newer approaches like social ecology, ecology of cities, environmental justice, post-colonial eco-criticism, eco-feminism, feminist eco-criticism, eco-Marxism, eco-philosophy, literature of toxicity, virtual environment, and urban nature emerged. Similarly, post-colonialism has flourished to include interesting concepts and dimensions such as space/place, displacement, orientalism, hybridity, otherness, alterity, ambivalence, etc. Thus, it is strange that scholars have yet to fully explore the untapped interdisciplinary possibilities between environmentalism and post-colonialism. This poor level of interdisciplinary engagement, what Rob Nixon refers to as reciprocal indifference and mutual reluctance, should be worrisome because both are bourgeoning areas in literary studies and share concepts that appeal to real and emerging experiences. Even the closest intersection between environmental literature and post-colonial literature – post-colonial eco-criticism – has not grown significantly in developing tenets that fit suitably and can be used to explore post colonies' unique social and environmental dynamics.

Basically, post-colonial eco-criticism foregrounds a critical perspective that implicates the colonial framework and political paradigms in environmentally debasing activities. This perspective is captured in the ecological or environmental justice principle, which ensures all ecosystem components' well-being. For Huggan and Tiffin, it is a theoretical frame that is centered on colonialism, especially the related factors that affect environmental practices in both colonizing and colonized societies (3). An exciting feature of post-colonial enterprise on environmentalism is that it captures the continuing inquiry into Western environmental practices in Africa and the Orients through colonization or imperialism that have persisted in their modern post-independence states. These imperial environmental ideologies in Africa during colonialism portrayed African people as part of nature and thus treated instrumentally as animals. These impressions gradually defined the socio-political and economic incursions that laid the foundation for violence and wars in many African states.

Nixon attributes the stunted growth of post-colonial eco-criticism to intellectual differences between traditional ecocritics and post-colonial critics on conceptualizing fundamental ideologies such as purity, place, nation, and history (717). The submissions of earlier scholars like Glotfelty and Fromm (1996), Booker and Juraga (2005), Vital (2009), Huggan and Tiffin (2010), among others, suggest that the interdisciplinary blend of post-colonialism and eco-

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

criticism is a literary formation to challenge the neo-imperialist modes of social and environmental dominance. Specifically, Booker and Juraga posit that post-colonial African literature manifests a natal connection between art and the social world, adding that African art responds to socio-political and historical developments. They suggest that the western tendency to declare African creative art primitive by definition is rather suspect (277). Their treatise on the tradition of appraising African art on the tenets of Western art touches a cardinal aspect of post-colonial eco-criticism – the need to establish whether or not the contributions of African writers to eco-criticism have been significant. Other critics have made contributions in this regard. William Slaymaker claims that the reluctance by Black African writers and critics to engage eco-criticism in more concrete terms can be traced to a sceptical position towards the hegemony of western eco-critical theories. He describes this reluctance or scepticism to engage eco-criticism as 'eco-hesitation' (684). Byron Caminero-Santangelo, however, refutes Slaymaker's claim on the premise that there has been no reluctance at all. She argues that Slaymaker and other critics assessed African scholars on the Anglo-American eco-critical framework steeped in deep ecology and functioning as a counter-anthropocentric model (698). She refers to the environmental activism in Africa with notable activists like Wangari Maathai who won the 2004 Nobel price and Ken Saro-Wiwa, who turned out to be Africa's first environmental martyr. Her essay proposes harmony in the relationship between environmentalism and imperialism in Africa.

The debate between Slaymaker and Caminero-Santangelo opens a broader spectrum to the dialectics between proponents of deep ecology and anthropocentrism. While Caminero-Santangelo may be right on the issue of using unfit frames to appraise African scholars, it is not safe to conclude that there has been sufficient engagement of post-colonial eco-criticism in African literary circles as there are yet many unexplored areas in this interdisciplinary enterprise. For instance, beyond questioning the Western traditional oeuvre on nature writing, to what extent have African scholars depicted pre-colonial human-nature bonding – a concept some scholars have described as environmental perception? What impact did colonial incursions have on this bond? How have neo-colonial structures determined the sustenance or destruction of this bond in post colonies? This paper attempts to describe how writers have depicted the distortions to environmental perception in the conflict spectrum using Nigerian civil war literature as an example. Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Roses and Bullets* have been selected for illustration.

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

Of Place and Displacement: Theorizing Environmental Perception in Post-colonial Eco-criticism

Environmental perception is a concept etched in environmental psychology. It describes how individuals experience a sort of emotional bond predicated upon a high sense of reliance and closure in a place. Sometimes, this confidence or closure, what Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford describe as a heightened sense of safety, is so strong that such individuals will not bulge even when such places are violent-prone or irredeemably endangered. Shynu, Kumar, and Sambath aver that perception of the environment, in real terms, is a dynamic experience that is often influenced by factors like gender, age, social factors, and other factors that are related to individual and group cognition (9). Soga and Gaston opine that two constructs define human-nature interactions – nature relatedness, which implies closeness with nature, and nature averseness, which is a negative response and manifests as what they describe as bio-phobia and nature apathy (16). This variation in perception defines the different ways people treat and respond to the non-human components of the environment. The concept of environmental perception is framed on place and displacement, which resonates with post-colonial criticism and eco-criticism. Place in the context of post-colonial studies refers to what happens when space – an empty or undesignated geographic area – is constructed or owned. Beyond the physical features like landscape or topography, place includes language, culture, religion, environment, climate, etc. Mina Najafi and Mustapha Kamal describe place as an experiential process that defines the form of identity and the unique character that makes a given place what it is (7638). They posit that place plays an inextricable role in the formation of self and group identity, adding that environmental perception can be measured by assessing the extent of satisfaction drawn from accessibility to a place or the distress suffered as a result of separation from a place. They further argue that environmental perception is predicated upon how well a place fulfills one's needs or a situation where the social and physical resources in a given place align with individuals' needs (7639) and see place attachment as a person-place bond that is sustained by forms of physical, spiritual, emotional and social connections.

Similarly, Rogayeh Parsa and Zohreh Torabi explain place as a particular space that is overlaid with meaning by individuals or groups. In simple terms, place = space + meaning/significance (31). They further describe the sense of place as a related concept that explains how people perceive, experience, express, and give meaning to a place (34).

From the preceding discusion, it is clear that environmental perception is a concept that fits into eco-critical discourse and enables the engagement of the experiences of post-colonial

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

subjects. Considering the fact that colonialism was associated with forms of acculturation that meant dislocation of post-colonies from place (in this case, place transcends biophysical attributes), and post-colonialism has featured experiences like conflict, industrial activities, and other activities that translate to displacement, it is not out of place for post-colonial literature to consider an environmental perspective to the clamour for reclamation of spaces/places. Indeed, some scholars have described post-colonial eco-critical literature as a frame that restores the connections indigenous people (post colonies) had with their surroundings or environment. Beyond colonialism, many other dimensions of environmental perceptions characterize the post-colonial experiences of many societies. Some of them are embedded in globalization, industrialization, socio-cultural or political dysfunctions, violence, or conflict.

According to Scannell and Gifford, person-place bonds have acquired fragility with the emergence of globalisation and the associated environmental issues which are hindrances to the sustenance of the bonds we have with places we cherish. They further posit that place attachment bond is measured in terms of the distress and grief expressed by those forced to relocate. Thus, environmental perception is a sit-to-fit concept in post-colonial eco-criticism. Scannell and Gifford further recommend some tenets of environmental perceptions in post-colonial eco-criticism. The first is the person dimension environmental perception, which describes the individual attachment or connections one has to a place because of memories, important realizations, or cognitions. The second dimension of ecological perception is the place dimension, which involves connections based on social relationships or group identity. This perspective captures social connections like climate, serenity, culture/tradition, and people. The third tenet is the function dimension of environmental perception, which describes the benefits that trigger man-place bonds with features like the medicinal value of plants, the economic value of resources found in place, and the propensity of place to offer survival and security. This view aligns with Sigmund Freud's postulation on the connections between filial attachment, nourishment and security (188). Scannell and Gifford elucidate other functions like links to past experiences or past people, what they describe as place-referent continuity (6), and a sense of belongingness. These tenets foreground the frame for the analysis in this paper.

Environmental Perceptions and Conflict in the Post-colonial Context

Post-colonial literature has been yoked with the hydra-headed socio-political developments on the continent. War, one such development, has become a common denominator in the literary canons emanating from many post-colonies. For instance, many African countries have had

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

their share of the war episode apart from Nigeria. Many post-colonies are experiencing one form of violence or the other. In fact, the records of violence, wars, and conflicts in Africa have become so alarming that the increasing clamour for the consideration of environmental sustainability is almost belated. A good number of post-colonies in East, North, and West Africa have experienced wars and violence of various proportions. Countries like South Africa, Congo, Angola, Algeria, Rwanda, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania, Namibia, Kenya, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chad, Zimbabwe, Liberia, Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast have experienced devastating violence, liberation, and civil wars. These wars have seriously affected the development of these countries negatively. It is, therefore, not surprising that war has been a resonating and widely studied theme in African literature since writers usually represent the socio-political developments in their societies. African writers, who recognize the social commitment function of literature, have written about the war experiences in their various nations. These writers have highlighted the causes of wars on the continent, life during war situations, and the impact of wars on place attachment. A few writers have commenced the process of raising global consciousness to the fact that wars and violence can disrupt environmental perception and impede ecological sustainability. One would expect that such raising of consciousness will discourage wars and promote environmental sustainability in Africa and beyond.

Narrowing down to Post-colonial Nigeria, socio-political developments in the country have been laced with varying degrees of violence over the years. These cases of violence, what Ezenwa Olumba describes as eco-violence, have left ugly imprints on the environment and shattered man-place relationships. Apart from the oil-related environmental crisis that has exacerbated the unrest in the Niger Delta region, there are cases of violence in other parts of Nigeria, such as the Fulani herders attacks on farmers in various parts of Nigeria, Boko Haram insurgency that is prevalent in the North East as well as other forms of violent communal clashes which result in forms of carnage that destabilize environmental harmony. Olumba attributes the problems listed above to structural and political factors and suggests that it is only a strategic and sincere restructuring of the political process that can restore the country on the path of peace and progress (190).

Many writers and critics have made submissions on the implications of violence and wars on the environment. These writers have argued that military activities and shades of violence destroy the ecosystem directly and indirectly, with consequences such as displacement and refugee crises. Displaced victims of war move from one place to the other, erecting makeshift

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

camps and plundering whatever natural resource that may be required for survival. Wartime survival involves felling of trees, premature harvesting of plants, unguided waste disposal methods, and other environmentally hazardous practices. These practices alter man-place bonds and ultimately ruin the ecosystem and life-support systems. African war scholars have made significant efforts to capture the scope of devastation caused by wars in the various genres and sub-genres.

The Nigerian civil war, which occurred from 1967 to 1970, is a ready example. The Nigerian Civil War theme has generated massive literary reactions. However, whether these contributions have sufficiently depicted the scope of the devastation wrought by the war or not is an argument that scholars need to establish with facts. The fact that this study focuses on the Nigerian civil war does not imply that other forms of environmentally hazardous activities, violence, and wars in different parts of Africa cannot be perceived eco-critically, especially if the focus of such eco-critical perception is post-colonial and considers the consequences of colonial and imperialist exploitative activities on the African environment. The focus on Nigerian civil war is premised on the fact that its literature yields easily to eco-critical reading since the dynamics of the war portray the role of imperialists and the patriarchal framework that fostered the abuse of vulnerable people as well as the distortion of life and life-support systems. The concept of environmental perceptions resonates in this study because it is a critical perspective in eco-criticism that yields studies on how wars foster displacement and forms of social and environmental abuse. The study is framed on post-colonial eco-criticism championed by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin.

Dimensions of Environmental Perceptions in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Roses and Bullets* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Environmental perception – a term that foregrounds human-nature interactions – is a contemporary approach to eco-criticism that presents environmental sustainability as a goal that must not only be accomplished for non-human life forms but also for humans who share inextricable bonds with the former. Conceptually, human-nature dualism, according to Val Plumwood, is an idea that describes the Western construction of human identity as outside nature, and this has laid the foundation for the scope of environmental abuse in many climes, most visibly in the conflict spectrum. Generally, in Africa, human identity is constructed as a part of nature, and this conceptualization has also defined human-nature interactions even within the conflict spectrum. As if to illustrate this interaction, Chinua Achebe describes flora

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

and fauna in constant relationship with humans in *Things Fall Apart*, by fictionalising the levels of significance individuals attach to places and the offerings of nature in a traditional Igbo society. It is the desecration of human-nature ties as a result of contact with the culture of the colonial masters that leads to the major conflict in the novel. Ngugi wa Thiong'o also captures the place-attachment sentiments and relationship to land that sparked off guerrilla resistance in Kenya. Ngugi's presentation of the Gikuyu living environment shows how the harmony and environmental friendly attitude of the Gikuyu people seemed to have been terminated by British interference, hence the resistance that followed. Like most communities in Africa, the Gikuyus showed a couched acknowledgment of reliance on non-human nature for psychological and physiological support.

Environmental perception, a concept that can almost be used interchangeably with place-attachment, is the construction of relations with place and space in the African worldview. It is a concept that describes the emotional bond between a person and a place, is etched in environmental psychology, and is quite significant to scholars in post-colonial eco-criticism. Lawrence Buell describes space as a "geometrical or topographical abstraction" and place as "a space to which meaning has been ascribed" adding that "the world's spaces were deterritorialized, stripped of their preceding significations, and then reterritorialized according to the convenience of colonial and imperial administration" (64). Buell's description is true in the Nigerian context considering the fact that British colonial masters merged incompatible groups to form one nation in 1914. This false start introduced legacies that culminated in the Nigerian civil war between 1967 and 1970 and have continued to threaten the co-existence of the nation-state.

Environmental perceptions or place-attachment theorists describe the concept as the emotional bond between a person and a specific environment or the psycho-spiritual essence a place provides to natives. When this bond is severed, some form of mutual displacement is suffered by humans and the natural environment. The fauna and the flora suffer alterations to their original survival configurations. At the same time, humans are displaced on emotional, psychological, physical, economic, and spiritual fronts. Interestingly, environmental perceptions and displacement discourse have been quite conspicuous in Niger Delta literature, where several writers have alluded to the continuous resettlements of several communities as oil spills and the activities of militants made their original abodes uninhabitable. Generally, displacement can occur when a place has become derelict as a result of some sort of natural disaster or man-made factors, forcing the inhabitants to seek life support elsewhere or when

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

people scamper for refuge in the face of life-threatening situations, as in wartimes. The ensuing textual illustration will highlight the impact of the Nigerian civil war, a sample of the conflict spectrum and the post-colonial context, on environmental perception using specific tenets. These tenets are person dimension, place dimension, function dimension, place-continuity referent, and sense of belongingness.

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* represents the metaphor of nature and place-attachment sentiments that characterized post-colonial Nigeria as well as the pain of displacement associated with the Nigerian civil war. Many of the characters in the novel portray some level of bonding with nature or specific revered spaces that the war would eventually sever. As the novel opens, Ugwu highlights his immediate natural surroundings' fragrance, aesthetics, and serenity. He refers to the sweet smell and avers that it was produced by the flowers around the bushes by the entrance. He further describes the bushes as shaped like slender hills and the lawn carefully pruned to glisten with butterflies hovering above (3-4). Later, Ugwu realizes that nature's offerings mean a lot to his hosts and their associates, who adorn their environment with plants, flowers, and trees and employ attendants to tend them. Jomo and Harrison tend Odenigbo and Richard's gardens, respectively. The fact that Ugwu desperately searches for a special by-product of the environment for its value symbolises the personal dimension of environmental perception. The narrator notes that Ugwu desperately searched for *arigbe* leaf all over the farm area, exploring branches of trees, trunks, and holes but did not succeed as Jomo had done a thorough weeding exercise before then (15). The beautifully tended lawn and gardens were of aesthetic relevance to the sophisticated hosts. This is an illustration of the person dimension of environmental perception – a situation where attachment to nature is based on cognitions or personal values; people like Ugwu and Harrison attach psychological and medicinal value to herbs and leaves. Ugwu believes that the *arigbe* leaf can suspend memory or alter the psyche of anyone that eats it. He seeks the leaf so his master will take it and forget about his [Odenigbo's] burnt pair of socks. Here, Ugwu manifests the function dimension of environmental perception. In this situation, people are attached to nature for certain gains or forms of relief. Similarly, Harrison manifests this dimension when he affirms that special herbs can be used to treat illnesses connected to men's reproductive system.

Richard manifests the person dimension of environmental perception when he gets carried away by the reminiscences of his countryside experiences and reflections on pleasant moments spent in England's most rustic spaces. He spends his solitary moments musing on nature; so

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

when he gets to the orchard in Kainene's Port Harcourt apartment, he is taken in by its freshness and semblance with his home in England. His psychological state is captured as follows:

> It was incongruous that this tropical, humid place, with the sun turning the skin of his arms a mild scarlet and the bees sunning themselves, should remind him of the crumbling house in England, which was draughty in summer. He saw the tall poplars and willows behind the house, in the fields where he stalked badgers, the rumpled hills covered in heather and bracken that spread for miles and miles, dotted with grazing sheep. (77)

Later, he reveals that he is usually "calmed by the scent of orange leaves and the turquoise stillness of the sea" (167). Richard's person dimension environmental perception shows clearly that human interaction with nature is a universal phenomenon and that one of the tragedies of war is a disruption of this harmonious relationship.

The novelist shows the extent to which war can sever human-nature relationships by presenting characters that are forced out of their bonds into unnatural places. For instance, as the war becomes intense, Richard no longer enjoys the luxury of reminiscing pleasant encounters with his environment in England or admiring the rustic resemblance in Kainene's home; he rather crouches to take shelter from shelling, watches shrapnel sever Ikejide's head and sees the ruins of buildings that were previously adorned with lovely flowers and vegetation. Before the war, Ugwu usually sat by his master's window to "watch the butterflies dipping and rising above the white flowers in the front yard" (84); Olanna spent her solitary moments or vent her frustrations by fixing her eyes on the offerings of nature. She would stand by the veranda of Odenigbo's house in Abba to watch baby play in the sand or the winds rustle the leaves of the guava and the fascinating discolouration of the bark (184). During her uneasy times with Odenigbo, she eased her mind by "watching a hen guard her chicks and guide them towards crumbs on the ground" (224) or "stand by a lemon tree" (241). But as the crescendo of the war rises, Ugwu plants mines to destroy the enemy soldiers, including the flowers and butterflies he adored while Olanna and her family escape from place-bonds and end up in squalid apartments. Ugwu, Olanna, Richard, Odenigbo, and other characters portray the universality of the constant interaction between humans and nature and the fact that conflict scenarios like the Nigerian Civil War disrupt these interactions in many ways. This disruption has also resulted in severe, trans-generational, and irreversible implications such as depletion of the ozone layer, rise in health challenges, and denial of aesthetic, emotional, or spiritual gratification.

Sometimes, attachment to place may be connected to things found there which offer spiritual, psychological, emotional, physical or economic gratification. At other times, myth,

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

cosmological leanings, and religious beliefs may lead to forms of attachment. In all cases, activities that sever the bond to a place are usually sudden, disruptive and frustrating to the affected people. Adichie captures the scope of environmental perception and the frenzy of displacement in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. First, Odenigbo and Olanna's attachment to their Nsukka apartment, a manifestation of the place dimension of environmental perception, is such that even when other families pack and leave, they nurse false hope that all will be well. Ugwu discloses that, even as Chinyere's mistress and many other families on campus are leaving. Cars are driving out of compounds with their boots sunken by heavy loads, and Olanna and Master are yet to pack a single thing (175). When it dawns on them that relocation is inevitable, they find it extremely difficult to determine what to take and what to leave behind. The novelist describes the frenzy as follows:

> Olanna looked dazed; she wrapped the pot of soup in a dishcloth and took it out to the car. Ugwu ran around throwing things into bags: Baby's clothes, Olanna's wrappers and dresses. He wished he knew what to take. He wished that sound did not seem even closer. He dumped the bags in the backseat of the car and dashed back inside to lock the doors and close the window louvers. Master was honking outside. He stood in the middle of the living room, feeling dizzy. He needed to urinate. He ran into the kitchen and turned the stove off. Master was shouting his name. He took the albums from the shelves, the three photo albums Olanna so carefully put together, and ran out to the car. He had hardly shut the car door when master drove off. The campus streets were eerie; silent and empty. (179)

Usually, situations that displace people are unexpected and unpleasant. Consequently, the movement to seek alternative places is confusing and frustrating, and the displaced people find it challenging to determine what to take and leave behind. Most of the time, they do not take enough, and the safety of what is left behind is badly compromised. The scenario above typifies place-continuity referent and sense of belongingness as aspects of environmental perception.

Adichie further illustrates the scope of wartime displacements using other scenarios. For instance, Odenigbo and his household are forced out of Nsukka by the fear of the invading Federal soldiers. They move to Abba, Odenigbo's hometown, and try to re-invent a new relationship with nature. They join Abba men and women to attend village meetings and accord significance to the *udala* tree (190), manifesting the function dimension of environmental perception. Gradually, they also begin to develop place-attachment sentiments, which theorists have called the place dimension of ecological perception. However, it does not take long before they are disconnected from that relationship again. As Odenigbo's family members move for the second time, his mother sticks to her passion for the place with the resolve to keep faith on the assurance of safety from the spirits of her land (195). Unfortunately, she dies for the love

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

of place. Yet, Odenigbo's family is displaced for the third time. At this point, as in other times, Olanna "wonders what she will take from the boot and what she will leave behind" (385). Odenigbo and his family members seek refuge in Kainene's apartment. Other families that have no safe place to seek refuge end up as refugees; thus, the refugee crisis can be described as a product of displacement during the Nigerian Civil War.

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays the consequence of the Nigerian Civil War on human-nature relationships. The novel reveals the parallels between the debasement of the environment and human suffering during the war. The major characters in the novel depict the person, place, and function dimensions of environmental perception as well as the attendant displacement that happens in the context of conflict.

Similarly, Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Roses and Bullets* is an interesting Nigerian Civil War narrative that depicts the experiences of ordinary people during the war. The novel is replete with representations of environmental perceptions and the pains of displacement in the war context. The protagonist, Ginika, is used to waking up to the beauty of nature in Mbano. While in Aunty Chito's house in Enugu, she reflects on the contrast between the two places and muses over the former. Ginika manifests the personal dimension of environmental perception through her personal psychological and emotional attachment to birds:

> In Mbano, you did not need a bell to ring to wake up in the morning. Birds would do it for you. They sang out so insistently outside the house in the surrounding trees that you could not but wake up. You couldn't help listening to their singing. You couldn't help having your fancy tickled. Above all, you couldn't help enjoying it. (16)

Ginika is attached to her place, Mbano, because of special cognitions and significance attached to small animals like birds. Apart from birds, she also has strong ties with the flora. As the outbreak of war worsens the already strained relationship she has with her father (who forcefully separates her from Aunt Chito and other relatives in Enugu) she reclines to nature for emotional support. In her moments of despair, "she loved to look at the trees and flowers in the compound. They soothed and calmed her nerves whenever she was in low spirits" (19). Even after her unsavoury encounter with Lt. Ofodile, she further demonstrates her deep connections with nature for its therapeutic essence by looking at and drawing relief from the trees in her compound. The first day she stays away from Orie-Agu, Ginika lies on a mattress under her favorite avocado pear tree all day until her father comes home for lunch (53). This is yet another evidence of an undisputed bond with nature and the manifestation of the personal dimension of environmental perception. Again, when Ginika gets to Philomena's house, she

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

cannot hide her craving for a natural habitat, which is undisrupted by chaos, hustle, and bustle; she is ecstatic about the trees surrounding the house. Ginika's special attraction to breadfruit, orange, *ube* and *udara* trees, all growing luxuriantly, and how she takes special interest in the breadfruit, allowing herself to be led away, musing about the paradoxical gifts of nature (59) clearly show the person dimension environmental perception.

Through Ginika, the novelist portrays the initial freshness and charm of a rustic habitat or natural environment. The forest spaces and natural environment are of great significance and give her indescribable peace and joy:

> The school was surrounded by a thick forest which Ginika found enchanting because she thought it held secrets no human being could fathom. She liked the air of mystery that overshadowed this huge compound secluded from the prying eyes of neighbouring communities. She enjoyed the fresh air created by the natural environment and admired the different kinds of flowers that grew in the gardens in front of the hostels and classrooms. (107)

Many of these environments described would lose their freshness to the violence of the war. The school compound, for instance, would become a refugee centre and be messed up by the teaming number of men, women and children struggling for survival; the houses that were surrounded by trees would be destroyed by bombs, even the lovely trees and vegetation would be split and scattered by shrapnels and other lethal bits of metal.

Similarly, Eloka loves roses and manages a rose garden even in the face of conflict. While interacting with Ginika, he admits his love for nature and a natural environment, noting that he loves the land and the things done on it, like farming, gardening, and growing flowers, especially roses (25). Eloka further manifests this great love for the fauna in how he tends livestock, especially rabbits. He tenderly rubs their bodies as they slip in and out of his arms; he speaks to them as if speaking to children, and the animals respond by saying goodbye in their own way (41). The way he meticulously tends roses and rabbits shows his great love and dependence on flora and fauna for emotional or psychological gratification. For Ginika and Eloka, red roses are esteemed far more than aesthetic values; they have deep psychological relevance and can connect lovers' hearts. Ginika picks a red rose and presses it to her nose, inhaling deeply, thinking of Eloka and longing to have him back (220). Ginika's action exemplifies the depth of human-nature attachment captured in environmental perception. These significant characters represent the novelist's portrayal of the harmonious relationship people shared with nature and the fact that the violence and uncertainties of war severed this bond significantly, perhaps beyond complete remedy. Although Donald Worster (1993) argues that "a natural ecosystem like a forest has considerable regenerative strength encoded in its

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

genes" (138), Adimora-Ezeigbo's novel shows that there may be no hope for complete regeneration of the ecosystem considering the scope of environmental devastation during the Nigerian Civil War. When Eloka returns from the war, his rose garden had turned into a "wilderness with the tangle of weeds, thorns and roses" (354).

Thus, Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Roses and Bullets* clearly demonstrates the far-reaching implications of environmental abuse during wars and violent situations. The novel portrays the bondman shares with the natural environment and how this bond is battered in the face of violence, leaving both man and the environment in irreparable losses. The concluding sections of the novel show that the trees, birds, animals, and other elements in the natural environment that sustained the human-nature attachment at the person dimension level had been battered beyond remedy, leaving trans-generational scars.

Conclusion

Scholars and critics have explored war narratives from different perspectives, but only a few have attempted environmentally-skewed approaches. Even the few environmental explorations of the war theme have tilted towards the physical ecological damage caused by the war. Not many have considered the scope of related physical, psychological, and emotional dislocations that manifest as consequences of violence. Environmental perception is a post-colonial eco-critical frame that accommodates the ranges of human-nature attachments, and the study has highlighted the disruptive tendencies of conflict in this regard. Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Agbasimalo's *Roses and Bullets* are interesting Nigerian civil war fictions that highlight environmental perception as a significant denominator to the experiences of ordinary people during the conflict that ravaged the Southeastern part of Nigeria between 1967 and 1970.

Works Cited:

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Heinemann, 1958.

Adichie, Chimamanda. Half of a Yellow Sun. Fourth Estate, 2007.

Adimora-Ezeigbo, Akachi. *Roses and Bullets*. University Press Plc, 2011.

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

Booker, Keith. & Juraga, Dubravka. "The Reds and the Blacks: The Historical Novel in the Soviet Union and Post-colonial Africa." *Studies in the Novel* Vol. 29. No. 3 (2005): 274-296.

Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Blackwell, 2005.

Caminero-Santangelo, Byron. "Different Shades of Green: Eco-criticism and African Literature." Quayson, Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato. *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. Blackwell, 2007. 698 – 706.

Glotfelty, Cheryll and Fromm, Harold. *The Eco-criticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology.* University of Georgia Press, 1996.

Huggan, Graham. & Helen. Tiffin. *Post-colonial Eco-criticism.* Routledge, 2010.

Najafi, Mina and Kamal, Mustafa. "The Concept of Place Attachment in Environmental Psychology." *Elixir International Journal* Vol. 45. No. 1. 2012: 7637-7641.

Ngugi, WaThiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind*. Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981.

Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor.* Harvard UP, 2011.

Olumba, Ezenwa. The Politics of Eco-violence: Why is Conflict Escalating in Nigeria's MiddleBelt? *Terrorism and Political Violence Journal.*Vol. 36. No. 2. 2024. 180 - 197.

Parsa, Rogayeh and Zohreh Torabi. "Explaining the Concept of Identity and Sense of Place in Residential Environment and Lifestyle." *Business and Management Review* Vol. 4. No. 5. (2015): 27-40.

Plumwood, Val. *Feminism and The Mastery of Nature*. Routledge, 1993.

Scannell, Leila and Robert Gifford. "Defining Place Attachment: A Tripartite Organising Framework." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* Vol. 30. No. 1. (2019): 1-10.

Slaymaker, Williams. "Echoing Other(s): The call for Global Green and Black African Responses." Tejumola Olaniyan, and Ato Quayson. *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. Blackwell, 2007. 683 – 697.

Shynu, Robert., Kumar, Santhosh., & Sambath, RD. "Factors Influencing Environmental Perception: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series.* 012040. 2021. 1-12.

Soga, Masashi & Gaston, Kevin. *Towards a Unified Understanding of Human-Nature Interactions.* Nature Research. 2021. doi: 10.1038/s41893-021-00818-z

Creative Saplings, Vol. 03, No. 10, Oct. 2024
ISSN-0974-536X, https://creativesaplings.in/
Email: editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.10.770

Vital, Anthony. "Toward an African Ecocriticism: Post-colonialism, Ecology and Life & Times of Michael K. ." *Research in African Literatures* Vol. 39. No. 1. (2009): 1-14.

Worster, Donald. *The Wealth of Nature*. Oxford Publishing, 1993.