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Introduction
In his ecopoetry, the postcolonial Anglophone Cameroonian diaspora ecopoet Emmanuel Doh perceives an inextricable and inevitable connection between the life of non-human species and human beings in the postcolonial context. Cognizant of the fact that the people of his postcolonial society depend on the environment for subsistence, and mindful of the fact that the environment particularly the forest is a communally owned resource which depends on the community for preservation and on which the community depends for survival, the poet approaches the question of environmental crises and the need for sustainability from a delicate position of interdependability. This paper argues that by filtering his ecopoetics through the ontological hermeneutics of cultural wisdom, Doh comes across as an ecoculturally conscious poet who criticizes the growing anti-environmental mannerism of postcolonial society, laments the egocentric and wastrel betrayal of community forest by postcolonial leadership, and opposes the epistemological anthropocentricism, consumerism, and capitalism of Western industrial ideologies. In the poems analyzed, Doh focuses on the examination of the “interfaces between nature and culture, animal and human” (Huggan and Tiffin, 6) and in this process, he explores straightforward and visual “forms of nature” (Lidstrom and Garrard, 38). The forest, which is the natural form that Doh targets, is not simply an environmental entity; it is part of the life of the postcolonial community and is encountered differently at different times as the Nigerian ecopoet Niyi Osundare observes in the Preface to his collection *Eye of the Earth*. Osundare reveals the experience of what it means to be enthralled by the charm of the forest when he
says “I encountered dawn in the enchanted corridors of the forest, suckled on the delicate aroma of healing herbs, and the pearly drops of generous moons” (1986:xi).

The Humanization of Forest

Unlike in Western literature and culture where forest is placed in binary opposition to civilization (Addition 2007:116), in African culture forest is an integral part of the life of the communities as it serves as the locations for religious, social and healing practices (Koppell, 1990) as well as the source of livelihood. To emphasize this connection between the people and the forest, Doh engages in the transference of human agencies/qualities to forest in a bid to reverse the materialist anthropocentric philosophy that is increasingly gaining grounds in postcolonial communities. Through the personification of forest/trees, Doh establishes a connection between the postcolonial people and the natural world of trees; and shows that the relationship was both symbiotic and synergetic. However, the intrusion of Western exploitative agents and their collaboration with postcolonial leadership has destabilized the relationship. The ecopoet is categorical in his insistence that there must be a balanced approach of mutual interdependence between human and non-human species. Doh’s call for a balanced approach in human relationship with the environment reflects his consciousness of the fact that in the postcolonial context the environment is a source of livelihood for the agrarian community.

It is an expression of his recognition that the universe is made up of “ubiquitously interdependent” connections (Dunning, 2013:70) as human beings depend on and are dependent upon nature – “interdependence-yet-dependent” (Zapt, 852).

In “These Cadavres”, the humanization of trees/forest involves an imaginative appropriation and transfer of human agencies to trees which confirms the humanity of the natural as well as the ecopoet’s creative impulse in initiating such personified connections. Doh’s poetics also relies densely on disease/death syntax, imagistic patterns and symbolic inferences from slavery to convey an emotional message about the effects of human activities on nature with particular emphasis on
trees/forest. The title immediately conveys a feeling of decease and expiry. The cadavers are suggestive of the fallen trees or the stumps that are left to dry off. In the context of the first line, it refers to the fallen trees – the Iroko, the Ebony, the Mahogany and the Obache. The first instance of humanizing the trees is when he refers to trees as “fallen soldiers” (6). The initial instinct is that the poem is about soldiers that died at war in which case Doh creates a correlation between the trees and soldiers in other poems like Wilfred Owen’s “For the Fallen” and Dzekashu MacViban’s “Much Ado About Bakassi” (21). In both poems, the fallen refer to soldiers who die at war to defend England and Cameroon respectively. The intertextual connection between these poems and by extension between the trees and the soldiers show that trees are as important to humanity as soldiers. This is buttressed when Doh adds that these trees “labour / Day and night for mankind” (6). Trees are not simply passive occupants of space; they contribute immensely to the health and protection of humanity. The importance of the trees to mankind is so intense that the poet sees trees and nature as indispensable to human existence. The destruction of trees therefore entails the destruction of humanity in the postcolonial context.

The dominance of death imagery in “These Cadavres” conveys Doh’s increasing fear about the random destruction of forest in postcolonial territories. The poet is apparently of the opinion that postcolonial ecologies are dying because of the excessive intrusion of human activities. The images reveal the connection between human life and ecological life by reflecting the destruction of ecological life as parallel to the death of human life. At the beginning of the poem, the word “cadavres” aptly convey the central idea because cadavre comes from the Latin word cadavere which means to fall. In the context of Doh’s humanization of trees, cadavres takes an even more intriguing dimension. A cadavre is a dead human body that is used to study anatomy. The anatomy involved here is that of African trees which have to be killed, dissected and examined to determine the type of plank, wood, furniture or paper that it can produce. The plural form (cadavres) evokes a scene of massive killing of human beings. But interestingly, it refers to the massive felling of
trees. The image of cadavres is reinforced by the reference to “fallen soldiers”. The impression that lines 1 to 7 create is that the poem is about the remains of dead soldiers. Doh succeeds in holding the reader’s attention by introducing the subject of ecological destruction from a purely human perspective. The initial instinct is for the reader to have a feeling of pity or share in the sorrow of the “fallen soldiers” being transported in “hearses” – another image that ties the experience to human beings. Doh successfully establishes a delicate correlation between the experience of fallen trees and dead soldiers. Thus, the sorrow and pity evoked by the death of soldiers should correspond to that which is evoked by the death trees; the lives of trees should be valued the same with that of soldiers. He therefore places human extinction on a parallel platform with that of trees and other ecological beings.

To establish the grounds for such interdependability, Doh uses death imagery associated to human beings especially from the perspective of the cultural wisdom of his postcolonial society. He writes of “… their places stand bare / without successors, leaving the villagers wondering” (6). The idea of the absence of successors for the “fallen sons” is indicative of the idea that deforestation is not matched by reforestation. The lack of a successor in the cultural wisdom of the grassfield people of Cameroon from where Doh hails is a major crisis because it signals the end of a family lineage, and families often go to any length to avoid such situations. By delving into the cultural consciousness of his people in his poetic discourse on ecology, Doh reveals the centrality of the ecological problem. He insists that the ecological problems should be handled with the same seriousness with which situations of the lack of a successor are treated. To achieve this, Doh makes profuse use of poetic language to suggest that even nature is endowed with an emotional capacity. The extinction of tree species is implicated and given cultural relevance by evoking the fright involved in the possible end of a family lineage.

There is the celebration of the death of a tree in “Today Ebony’s funeral was celebrated…” (6) and mourning by the earth because there is “tears on Mother Earth’s checks” (6) as “she
mourns” the loss of her “fallen sons” (6). These images also convey the masculinization of the trees and the feminization of the earth. In line with the absence of successors, Doh’s masculine image of the trees conforms to the cultural wisdom of his people. The emphasis in most Cameroon grassfield (and African) cultures is on the son because it is believed that he will beget other sons and keep the family lineage alive. The feminization of the earth in “Earth Mother” is a phenomenon that has been in literature for centuries though feminists have questioned the process under the assumption that it places the earth under the yoke of patriarchal dominance. The earth is pictured as the eternal feminine who endures time and tides of human problems by watching its children fall in the hands of anthropocentrists and capitalists.

The humanization of forest and other ecological live or non-human nature through the transference of human qualities to trees is also evident in the poetry of most Anglophone Cameroon and African poets. Unlike in Doh’s poetry wherein the earth mourns the cutting of trees, in Matthew Takwi’s “Trees on the March Past”, it is the forest that mourns. Although Doh talks about the earth and Takwi talks about the forest, both poets are pointing to the same reality – the agony caused by the hysterical destruction of trees in the African ecosphere. Takwi’s title suggests the successive progression of timber trucks from Cameroon’s rain forest to the coastal ports. Like Doh, he conceives of the forest as a family unit where trees are “sons and daughters” (31) that fall prey to the greed of forces of destruction – western imperialist and local cohort. Takwi writes:

Swollen eyes of dark dense tropical forests,
Carelessly shed tons of tears in agony
As giant sons and daughters continuously collapse
From ceaseless rumblings of engine saws
that devour their hands and feet;
To the wind’s angry worried looks. (31)

Takwi’s creates an agonizing context where forest is mourning the recurrent cutting and dismemberment of trees. The language of the poet conveys intense emotional agony in the face of what he describes as “ceaseless rumblings of engine saws” (31). The forest has “swollen eyes”, trees are said to have “hands and feet”
which are being consumed and the wind is “angry” and wears “worried looks” (31). Takwi’s word choice does not simply give human attributes to trees but also shows the profundity of misery that has engulfed the forest. This phenomenon of attributing negative human emotions to nature is also evident in the poetry of the Nigerian ecopoet Tanure Ojaide who in “Delta Blues” laments that the Delta area is full of “alchemical draughts” (21) as multinational companies continue to exploit the wealth of the region. The dwelling which the poem captures is described in terms of a paradise that has been inflicted with wounds: This share of paradise, the delta of my birth, / reels from an immeasurable wound” (21). Ojaide’s imagistic pattern and diction in the entire poem is fraught by a dense sense of negativism towards the place of his birth because “it gives immortal pain” (21) to the poet as he watches birds and animals flee for life while rivers are polluted and the earth excavated for oil. Evidently, most postcolonial African ecopoet are engaged in the ecopoetics of lamentation as they project every element of nature as suffering from the effect of the ceaseless exploitation. These poets invest significant amounts of negative emotional energy in natural and environmental entities in a bid to appeal to human emotions and imagination.

In the visionary ecopoetics of Doh, Takwi, Ojaide and Osundare as well as of other ecopoets like Nol Alembong (2012), and Nsah Mala (2012), the landscape of the poetic imagination is fused with the landscape of postcolonial ecologies thereby making it possible for the language of the poem to express the emotions of the environment. This is probably why Angus Fletcher points to the centrality of poetic art in people’s understanding of the environment “[a]n art like poetry that enhances the presence of the individual is bound to be central in showing how we should understand our environmental rights and obligations” (4). In Doh’s ecopoetics, it is the earth that is mourning; in Takwi’s, the forest is mourning its own fate because nobody seems to care especially given that the act is perpetuated with the connivance of community leaders who are supposed to safeguard it. In earnest, these natural elements are not the ones mourning. The real mourners are the poets and the communities
they represent. The synergistic and symbiotic connection between the natural world and the poetic imagination allows the poets to transfer and transpose their innate feeling of guilt about the destruction of the environment to the natural forces. The earth is not mourning, the forest does not have swollen eyes, the wind is not angry; all these emotions belong to the poets. The aesthetics of their ecopoetics carries the profundity of the emotional turmoil whirling in their imaginative spheres of these poets as they watch the forest zones transform to vast wastelands. This is where the integrity of their postcolonial visions and the poetic value of their art steps out of the sphere of individual imagination and engages both the community and the reader to rethink the emotional effects of depleting forest resources. By investing their imagination into the environment and inviting the environment into their imagination, these poets make it clear that “poetry is the place where we can save the earth” (Bates, 2000: 283).

When Doh says the earth mourns it is not simply because of the cutting of trees but also because other ecological entities like human beings “are deprived / of the contributions” trees make “to our health” (6). Placed in the context of Arne Naess (1973) “deep ecology”, one can undoubtedly perceive in Doh’s poetics the idea which Susan McCaslin (2011) talks about when she says “every being and life form has intrinsic worth as part of an organic, interconnected whole” (65). From this perspective, Doh humanizes the trees or forest by emphasizing the role it plays in human life. In “These Cadavres”, there is a general reference to the contribution of nature to human health. This takes a more profound turn in “The Canopy” - a title suggestive of the palliative shade that trees provide for human beings. The poet identifies some of the specific health and existential functions that trees provide to humanity as he poetizes about “leaves that feed”, and “backs and roots” used for medicinal purposes. He also talks about paper, furniture, houses and fuel derived from the trunks/wood. Intriguingly, it is for the sake of these things that trees are destroyed. This however does not mean that the poet endorses the anthropocentric exploitation of ecological resources. Rather, he advocates a balanced and reasonable approach where nature depends on humanity and
humanity depends on nature. This is why he cries out in “The Canopy” that ecological entities “Are a major source of wealth at the risk of /Nature’s rhythmic cycles when depleted” (7). The poet recognizes the necessity for humans to depend on the environment for livelihood. But, he is against the random and irresponsible destruction of nature. If humanity must live a healthy life, it must preserve the wealth of the environment and maintain nature’s “rhythmic cycles”, that is the natural seasons.

The language of Doh’s poetry involves “an attunement to things and environment that can be helpful in understanding our era of increasingly intense interrelation of human and environment” (Peacock, 2012: 86). But as a postcolonial ecopoet, his language transcends the attunement function and carefully ties the fate of the trees to that of human being in the pre/postcolonial ecosphere. Doh humanizes the forest/trees by comparing their condition to that of slaves who were captured from Africa and taken to foreign lands. Through metaphorical inferences, he associates the trees to slaves thereby conveying the idea that Africa still bears the burden of Western greed. In “These Cadavres”, he says African trees are cut and “[…] carted away in giant-size hearses / To the sandy shores of alienation / Like our brothers and sisters before.” (6). This comparison links the experience of African slaves to that of African resources in the colonial and postcolonial era. The time span signaled through the use of “before” establishes a context of historicity and continuous exploitation of Africa by Western powers. The preposition “before” is suggestive of a period preceding or prior to a particular date, event or time. The event in this instance is the exploitation and transportation of Africa’s ecological resources. Prior to this, there was the exploitation of Africa’s human resources through slavery. The use of “before” in the comparison reveals the time-line between the two acts. Slavery took place several centuries and now, African forest suffers the same fate that African people suffered. Just like the slaves that were separated from their families, the trees are separated from the rest of the forest, from the earth and from the communities. Between slavery and post-independence, the West has continued to exploit the people and resources of Africa. Western capitalist and
consumerist tendencies often victimize Africa humanly and/or naturally. The simile that links the destiny and destination of the trees to that of slaves is an attempt by the postcolonial ecopoet to interpret the present in terms of the past.

Doh uses other images to connect the condition of the trees to that of slaves particularly the journey and ocean/sea imagery. These are two images that central to the experience of slavery. The trees from the African shores are said to be experiencing the same mystery and infinity, death and rebirth, and transitional incarnations as the slaves experienced in their long journey across the sea. The reference to the trade as Transatlantic makes the Atlantic Ocean a major component of slavery. Doh trees will have to experience:

The long journey across the oceans
The tiring journey across the seas they must
Withstand. (6)

The journey motif is used to illustrate the ordeal of travelling from the African coastlines to the new worlds. The poet places particular emphasis on the length and exhaustion that characterizes the journey. The timber has to undergo and withstand the same conditions as the slaves. Through the evocation of the historicity of slavery and the conveyance of the ordeal, Doh awakens in the reader a deep sense of concern about the fate of ecological resources that are transport everyday across the globe. By making the cutting and transportation of African forest synonymous to the capturing and enslavement of Africans in the slave era, the poet attaches a feeling of urgency in the need to terminate such wanton abuse of natural resources.

**Western Anthropocentricism and Entangled Ecosphere**

The Western concept of civilization, which colonialists claim to have introduced to Africa, was based on the necessity to destroy forest as a means of introducing ‘light’. As Robert Harrison notes, the Western notion of civilization considers the forest to be antithetical to the city and so it places the need to build the city above the necessity to preserve forest (1992:2). Fundamentally, therefore, Western civilization placed humans in a position of preeminence over everything else and promoted the
viewing and interpretation of things in strictly human terms, perceptions, values, and experiences. Based on this anthropocentric philosophy, Europe and North America destroyed its “thickly wooded” spaces in the interest of building cities. This is the type of thinking and ideology which Timothy Clark (2010) says is antiquated and defective because it is the cause of the current environmental predicament.

When there was little left to cut, the West turned the axe and chain-saw to Africa and other wooded areas around the world. In a bid to justify the savage destruction of African forest, Europeans used their definition of civilization to contextualize the backwardness of Africa. As Homi Bhabha (1994) rightly puts it “[t]he objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction (101). The system of administration and education were instruments for the propagation of the philosophy of civilization which was aimed at victimizing the ecologies of colonized peoples. Contrary to the anthropocentric tendencies of earlier Western thinking, critics like Lawrence Buell (2001) insists on the necessity to understand that human history is inextricably linked to the environmental history, and that in the universe human interests are not the only interests. However, in the context of colonial exploitation and neocolonial manipulation of African natural resources, the only interest that mattered and still matters is that of the neocolonialist – that of neocolonial ecological imperialism. To the West, the history of African environments is linked to its history of civilization. But to the African, this history is one of concomitant victimization, corruption and exploitation of both the human and natural resources of the continent. Since Michel Foucault (1982) argues that history is written by the person with power, even the contemporary history of African environments is written and determined largely by forces of neocolonial West. This is why postcolonial African ecopoets continue to criticize the hypocrisy of the West and to lament the increasing exploitation of African forest in the midst of much debate about preservation and conservation.
As a postcolonial ecopoet, Doh is concerned not so much with the influence of local populations on the environment. His primary concern is with postcolonial forces notably Western conglomerates, and post-independence African leadership. This does not mean that he fails to find cultural and developmental practices that are detrimental to the environment. He thinks that the influences of Western multinational companies are largely responsible for the depletion of African ecospheres and the African people can stop them. Because he sees trees as invaluable to the survival of human beings, Doh castigates both the Western exploiters and their local facilitators. His poetry is thus a form of resistance against the random and rampant destruction of African forest, and a conscious lament about the effects of environmental degradation. In “The Canopy” he talks about “huge trucks” that transport timber to coastal ports where the timber is loaded in vessels destined for Europe and America. He writes:

Yet, day after day, year after year, huge trucks
Transport them to the coast where
Floating monsters swallow them up
For future regurgitation

The emphatic repetition of “day”, “year” and “huge” is strategic in that they reveal the consistency and continuity of the destruction of trees as well as the quantity or number of trees that are cut within such timeframes. This indicates that the process is rampant, excessive and unchecked. The negative projection of marine vessel ready to “swallow” timber from the hinterlands of Africa is an expression of the poet’s dissatisfaction with what is happening. Lidstrom and Garrard adroitly suggest that ecopoetry “inspires wonder and appreciation for the non-human world” but to say that this is often in a celebratory tone (38) is problematic especially to the postcolonial ecopoet because, as evident in Doh’s language, there is more of lamentation that celebration. The poetics of postcolonial ecopoet like Doh is one of nostalgia, regret, resistance and anger. Even when they celebrate the leftovers of imperial rampage they inevitably find themselves caught between nostalgia and regret. Doh’s description of the ships as “monsters” conveys not simply the monstrosity of the vessels but also the bestiality of the whole process.
This excessive destruction of trees is facilitated by postcolonial leaders for personal greed and satisfaction. These lines evoke the sense of community through the use of third person pronouns – the collective “we” and the possessive “our”. This is an account of a community’s encounter and experience with forces of environmental destruction expressed through the poetic consciousness of the individual. The persona says:

We hear names of
Local nobles responsible for the exploitation
Of our forest and for no reason it seems,
For we never get a dime from these routine (7)

Conscious of his role as mouthpiece of the community, the poet speaks as an individual but locates his thought within the collective will and consciousness of the people. Considered in relation to ownership and responsibility, Doh’s word choice shows the cultural belief of his people as forest is never the possession of an individual. Forest is owned by communities because it transcends the possessive capacity of an individual and embodies the spirit of the community. Ken Siro-Wiwa (1992) divulges the importance of forest to the African people when he says:

This respect for the land means that forests are not merely a collection of trees and the abode of animals but also, and more intrinsically, a sacred possession. Trees in the forest cannot therefore be cut indiscriminately without regard for their sacrosanctity and their influence on the well-being of the entire community, of the land. (12)

The well-being of the community surpasses the needs of the individual and so the indiscriminate cutting of trees by any individual is considered sacrilegious because it violates the sanctity of this communally owned and shared place. Unfortunately, the local leaders who have the responsibility to cater for and safe-guard the forest and its ecological beauty have fallen prey to the greedy, capitalist and consumerist ideologies of neocolonial exploiters. He decries the fact that the custodians of African forest are the people who now champion the course of destroying community forest for personal profit.
The destruction of African forest and the consequent degradation of the environment is a regular process “routine” which ironically does not benefit the communities whose ecospheres are destroyed. The consequence of random cutting of trees is the disruption of the ecological life of the community. In the poem “The Belly of the Jungle”, Doh comes out pretty clearly in the following lines:

From the belly of the jungle
To the fringes of hamlets,
I hear the sounds of game.
Monkeys staring with concern
From the forest’s edge at our coming and going

The impression that Doh give here is that nonhuman inhabitants of the forest are conscious of the fact that our activities are disrupting their life style, reason for which the monkey is “staring with concern” (5) at the way humans invade their habitat. The inhumanity of human activities towards other nonhuman species is abundantly clear. As human go in “chase of modernization” (5), they forget that other environmental lives are affect by their volition for new structures. Doh is concerned with the type of landscape which postcolonial societies are developing – one in which there is total disregards for other forms of live. This is what Hubert Zapt (2008) describes as “landscapes produced by modern culture and consciousness” (852). The culture of modernization which Doh condemns is not ecoculture because it does not preserve or seek to preserve other ecological species or environmental forms. He laments the fact that “we build and build in chase of modernization” (5) yet we lose sight of the fact that “now even, the water is muddy;” and “gone are the roots / that once held the earth together” (5). Here Doh is acting as “a geographer of the imagination and a historian of the alienation and desecration that follows that march of ‘civilization’” (Dunning 70). The poet is also conscious that while decrying the disproportionate devastation of forest, it is important to recognize that there are other simple activities that encroach on the function of natural processes. Thus, the “we” takes collective
responsibility for the environmental disaster that postcolonial societies face.

The role of Western industrial agents and postcolonial leaders in the depletion of the environment is also communicated in Chibingwa Tumaju’s “Just Before My Country Dies”. In the poem, Tumanju in a nostalgic tone describes the process of excessive cutting down of trees and how this has led to consequences like excessive heat. He contrasts the past and the present to show how human activities affect forest landscapes. He says:

You see the place on which I stand
This was timberland in days of old.
It was all dark within the timber,
Always midnight even at noon.

The presence of the past enters the poem through the concept of remember worlds which deals with the poet’s ability to contrast the present environmental reality with a form of environmental reality that exists only in his poetic mind. The existence of such reality provides a template for the ecopoet to discuss the gruesome effects of human activities on the environment. The experience of the poem is enacted on a particular place – the place where the poem stands – as he contrasts the place now and how it was “in the days of old”. The density of the forest is conveyed in the image of darkness and midnight. This is indicative of an ecological environment that is original or that has not witnessed the encroachment of human activities.

I and my country-men lumbered some
Timber to make a passage for our feet
It was all dark within the passage
Always dark even at noon.

The poet is careful in the way he establishes the developmental agenda of the community before the arrival of the European colonizers. The type of development that the communities practiced was sustainable and friendly to the environment. It is interesting to note that the poet and his community “lumbered some trees” to create roads but the forest was unaffected by such development. Even after they had dug their roads, it was still “dark within the passage” because they preserved their forest and
natural beauty in the process of development. However, such sustainable development ended with the coming of the colonial masters and their reckless and uncontrolled lumbering of the timber. The poet writes:

It was my countrymen and their neighbours
Who brought this sunlight down here.
They lumbered off more timber
To the lumber-mills in their lumberyards;

There is an intriguing shift in tone as the poet distances himself from the new form of development which pays no attention to nature. There is also distancing from “my countrymen” because they have imbibed the new form of development that focuses on the cutting of trees for personal aggrandizement. The sense of community and communal development expressed in “I and my countrymen” is disrupted when the countrymen decide to promote personal interest in the indiscriminate destruction of community forest. The shift from “I and my countrymen” to “my countrymen and their neighbours” signals the point at which Europeans encountered Africa. The neighbours refer to different colonial masters that invaded the African continent. The community is said to have “lumbered some timber” but the neighbours “lumbered off more timber” and the consequence is that “they brought this sunlight down here”. Doh and Tumanju examine the consequences of the random exploitation cutting of trees or forest but while Doh talks about the absence of roots to solidify the earth and stop the erosion of fertile soil, Tumanju targets the excessive sunlight and heat that postcolonial communities now suffer from because of the lack of trees. Like Doh, Tumanju’s thinking underscores the importance of developing the environment but is of the opinion that the system of development introduced by colonialism has destroyed the African ecosphere. They both share the conviction that the Western concept of forest as “clustered and darkened spaces that had to be cleared in order to let in enlightenment” (Addison, 2007:116) is wrong because it endangers the life of the species that inhabit the forest and compromises the ability of the community to live in harmony with its forest resources or environmental/transcendent forces. Both poets call for a return to
true sustainable development which in their opinions is the form of development that is conscious of the existence of other life forms and natural elements on which humanity depends and which depend on humanity.

Doh’s interpretation of the current ecological disaster through an intense sense of nostalgia is reminiscent of Niyi Osundare’s perspective in “Forest Echoes”, the first poem in *Eye of the Earth*, and Nol Alembong’s “Forest Echoes” which is the title poem of the collection. The intratextual correlations evoked by the analogous titling of two poems in separate postcolonial ecospheres underscore the importance of forest in the life of postcolonial communities across Africa. In Osundare’s poem, the persona enters the forest of *Ubo Abusoro* and is stunned by the destruction of the land and the trees by *agbegilodo* – the timber merchants. Set in the past when humans, animals, land, and plants formed a cosmic and harmonious whole, the poem provides an avenue for Osundare to reflect on the present ecological disaster. To the postcolonial African ecopoet, the present and the past are relevant as they convey an ongoing process of exploitation of their ecosphere. If one goes by T.S. Eliot’s logic in “Burnt Norton” that “Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future / And time future contained in time past”, then it might as well be said that the future of Africa is already trapped in this cycle of exploitation because neocolonial forces and global technologies and philosophies continue to place the continent in a tragic marginal position. This future is even more tragic because as Uzoechi Nwagbara (2010) argues “the present language of colonialism, which uses neo-colonialism as a veneer, makes it intractable to understand the peril of ecological imperialism” (19). This is because such subtle but severe form of ecological imperialism “comes in the guise of foreign donor packages, international development aids, business operations multinational corporations, foreign partnership deals and other hues” (19).

From the resistance, lamentation and criticism that is evident in the poetry of Doh and other postcolonial African poets, it is apparent that ecopoetics/poetry is one of the forms of “oppositions which have developed over the last few years” –
opposition to the power of human over the environment (Foucault, 780). Through his poetry, Doh engages an active “re-creation of experience” (Dunning, 71) within a postcolonial context with the intent of effecting positive change in the human-environment relationship. By calling the attention of the community to the exhaustion of the forest, the disruption of other ecological lives and the destruction of other natural forms like streams and soil, Doh engages in a mind changing process than political activism.

Conclusion
Emmanuel Fru Doh’s poetics depends largely on the ontological hermeneutics of cultural wisdom as he endeavours to negotiate a poetic/creative treatise between the increasing anti-environmental tendencies in postcolonial African societies and the ongoing realities of ecological disasters. Perceived as an inextricable and inevitable connection, non-human species are superimposed with human quality not as a way of naming and claiming them but rather as a means of appealing to the emotional sense of human being in the postcolonial context. Doh is a poet who is conscious of the fact that his postcolonial society is agrarian in nature and depends on the environment for subsistence, so his poetics seeks to create a balanced approach towards environmental preservation and use. Doh is also mindful of the fact that the environment particularly the forest is a communally owned resource which depends on the community for preservation and on which the community depends for survival. This is the reason for which he approaches the question of environmental crises and the need for sustainability from the perspective of interdependability.

Using examples from other African poets, this paper shows that Doh is an ecoculturally conscious poet who does not only disapprove of the growing anti-environmental mannerism of postcolonial society and the wastrel betrayal of community forest by postcolonial leadership, but also calls the people’s attention to an urgent need for change. According to Doh, the epistemological anthropocentricism, consumerism, and capitalism of Western corporate philosophies are largely
responsible for the depletion of African forest and natural resources. His poetry ties the fate African forest to that of African slaves thereby perpetuating the idea that even in the global world, Africa still bears the burden of Western greed. To Doh and to other African poets, the Western form of civilization, which prioritizes the building of cities over the preservation of forests and other natural forms, is the wrong approach for African societies because the forest to the African symbolizes (not simply a collection of trees) an existential cosmos that encompasses medicinal, and nutritional elements as well as spiritual and transcendental forces which are vital life-links to the people’s survival. The forest, therefore, is the life of the postcolonial community and it is encountered, respected, revered and used in differently at different times for different purposes.

Works Cited


