

**EUROCENTRISM AND THE AFRICAN FLORA AND FAUNA: AN ECO-CRITICAL DISCOURSE OF OBINKARAM ECHEWA'S *THE LAND'S LORD***

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**ABSTRACT**

Eco-criticism is a branch of literary discourse concerned with the investigation of the relationship between man and nature, the eco-system and the eco- sphere. The approach examines how literary writers perceive and reflect nature and natural phenomenon in their literary works. It also investigates how nature influences man and how the activities of man invariably affect nature. Obinkaram Echewa's novel, *The Land's Lord* is one of the Nigerian novels that reflected the realities of the lives of the African people during the time of the colonial contact and conflict that was an inevitable historical realities of the people. The novel also captured the scenes from the colonial time as well as the vagaries of lives and situations that existed between the Africans and the Europeans. This study examined the European perception of the African environment as reflected by the writer as part of the issues surrounding eco-critical discourse of literary works. With the adoption of Eco-criticism as an approach to literary works, the study examined the connection between man and nature vis-a-vis how man and nature affect each other in the world. The study reveals that the Europeans whose ideas are rooted in their Eurocentric views and ideals of life have a way of perceiving the African environment as a jungle, a den and such a horrible environment where nature is often in conspiracy to inhibit and militate against the wellbeing of man. How the Europeans perceived of the African environment as demonstrated in the novel and the viewpoint of the writer in the face of this Eurocentric perception of the African flora and fauna is the crux of the study.

**Keywords:** Eco-criticism, Environment, Eurocentrism, Afrocentrism, Nature, Eco-system, Flora and Fauna, primitivism, Barbarism.

**INTRODUCTION**

Eco-criticism is one of the new arrivals on the scene of literary criticism. It is the type of criticism that reflects the idea of 'literature going green'. The term 'eco-criticism' was first used by William Rueckert in 1978 in his essay entitled "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-criticism". The idea and the whole set up refer to the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature.

Eco-criticism as a theory of critical discourse is still an evolving field and in the view of that, there exist ongoing suggestions, postulations and dimensions added to the body of the theory as a distinctive literary critical theory. According to Cheryl Glotfelty on Eco-criticism as a literary theory, quoted in Anne Dobie, "eco-criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment". On the other hand, Lawrence Buck asserts that "eco-criticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of

view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation (239). Other definitions exist on eco-criticism which vary in their perspectives and dimensions but irrespective of the several variations and differences in approach, the critics have something common which is their collective interest in examining the relationship of literature and nature as a way of renewing and stimulating a reader's awareness of the non-human world and his or her responsibility to sustain it. Those critics share in common, a fundamental premise that all things are inter-related, and that they are actively concerned about the impact of human actions on the environment. From the above therefore, we arrive to a logical conclusion that eco-criticism as a literary theory is interested in the relationship between man and nature as well as the overall description of the ecological sphere in literary works with special attention to the writers attitude towards them.

Eco-criticism is an off-shoot of literary criticism which concerns itself with the study of nature, man and his activities with his environment. It is one of the major canons of literary criticism in the 1990s and is fast spreading into the mainstream of literary discourse, as writers, critics and scholars alike are becoming more and more conscious of the injustice of man and his sheer economic exploitation of nature which plays a vital role in the life and survival of human beings.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Eco-criticism takes its concern in the fact that man is part of the natural existence and that actions against nature invariably are actions against humanity and well-being of man. It tends to mediate between man and nature as means of providing more conducive, comfortable and habitable environment for man in his world. Nature plays an integral role in the lives of human beings and a negligence to this fact calls for a serious concern. Igba Luga in a succinct interpretation of the opinions of Hiebert avers that nature is the "totality of the process and beings in the world, the entire earth and its ecological systems in which the human is a natural member". This attests then to the fact that man is an integral part of nature who affects and is affected by ecological changes (203). Obviously true is the fact that the world has turned into a global one. The high rise in global GDP, the rise in technology, ICT, human and economic growth leave much to be applauded and envied in the physiognomy of our world today. But a second and deeper look will expose how nature is at the receiving end of this height of achievement. Trees have been cut to make ways in the forest; bushes have been burnt to create wider roads for exploration of several mineral resources; animals have been slaughtered in thousands to meet the increased demands in our hide and skin markets in bid of the producers to satisfy the teeming market. Rivers have been affected and aquatic life destroyed in the bid to explore oil and other natural resources. The ozone layer is under continual threat and will face greater threats as the world continue to pillage nature for her monumental growth and industrialization. The economically developed countries (EDCs) and the third world countries have set out various goals, targets and dreams to be met in a few years to come. This is a way of boosting their economy thus, ensuring a better provision and exploitation of the gains of technology for their citizens as the scene of the world continues to change. For deterrence purposes as well as hegemonist designs, nuclear weapons are produced and tested as states strive to out-number each other in stockpiling nuclear warheads in their arsenals as well as improving and miniaturizing existent delivery systems. Oil is being and will continue to be discovered in many regions of the earth in the bid for the privileged countries to build a formidable economy and measure up on the international scene, everything possible is made to ensure that oil is harnessed to the height of economic

boom. In all these visions and plans, nature in many ways is the sacrificial lamb to be slain on the altar of globalization and economic growth. This nature in turn affects the living of human beings and endangers human lives, a situation that calls for serious reflection and critical attention.

Many writers and scholars have created works, literary and non-literary all in defense and rescue of the environment. Environmental literature entails all writing about nature as well as other environmentally-induced interests and issues. These works are regarded as Eco-literature, Eco-lit for short. This is as a result of the regard for nature and a call for its preservation in consideration of the vital and irreplaceable role which the natural world plays in the lives of human beings. Thus, an appraisal of man's activities as it affects nature; an awareness of this fact; a close scrutiny and how this injustice to nature affects man in return constitute the idea of eco-criticism in literary discourse. This is the adopted framework for this study.

The study armed with this approach, hopes to investigate the perception of the African natural environment, her flora and fauna with close textual attention to Obinkaram Echewa's *The Land's Lord*. The study using the Eco-critical approach, enquiries on the role and place of nature vis-à-vis European and African conceptualization as projected by the writer in the novel.

### Review of Relevant Scholarship

Environmental literature and the study of man and ecological system is fast spreading in Africa and finding expressions in many literary works of African writers. According to William Slaymaker:

Black African critics and writers have traditionally embraced nature writing, land issues and landscape themes that are pertinent to national and local cultural claims and that also functions as pastoral reminiscences or even projections of a golden age when many of the environmental evils resulting from colonialism and the exploitation of indigenous resources have been remediated. A review of any number of bibliographies, literary histories, and anthologies of black African literature and criticism in the past several decades will bear out this intense interest in the local recapture of a violated nature. (683)

Also in the view point of Byron Caminero Santangelo while appraising eco-criticism and African literature in terms of effort so far expresses that:

In the past fifteen years, African environmental activism has been brought to the world's attention through the martyrdom of Ken Saro Wiwa and more recently, by the awarding of the Nobel Peace prize to Wangari Maathai. These figures point not only to the ways that Africans have mobilized against environmental degradation, but also to the grave environmental problems faced by Africa which have become, especially in conjunction with social problems, a significant threat to its present and future-well-being. Ken Saro-Wiwa's leadership also

suggests that African writers can play a significant role in environmental causes. Just as they have in other forms of social activism .... (698)

Thus, environmental literature has been in the increase overtime as writers and scholars have continued to see the need to use the medium of writing and literature to project the cause of man and his environment and to decry what each and every one of them felt as perpetual injustice and aberration.

Eco-criticism, in all, is a branch of literary discourse concerned with the investigation of the relationship between man and nature, the eco-system and the eco- sphere. It examines how literary works approaches and reflected nature and most importantly how nature influences man and how the activities of man invariably affects nature. A critic using this approach is interested in how nature is reflected in a work of art. The critic examines the relationship between literature, man and nature and the role nature played in the course of a story. The critic using eco-criticism as a literary theory to criticize and evaluate a work of art is chiefly concerned with man's activities to nature and the role, significance and place of nature in a literary work which paves way for a deeper understanding of the given work of art. From the view of Anne Dobie, an eco critic should be on the look out of the following:

- Does the setting function simply as background, or does it play an active role in the narrative?
- If it plays an active role, how important is it in working out the narrative?
- If the physical setting were a character in the text, how would you describe him or her?
- How is nature affected by human beings in the text?
- How are the human beings affected by nature?
- How responsible are the human beings for the environment?
- What questions does the text raise about human interactions with nature
- Does the text direct the reader's interest to nature, or only to the human characters?
- Does the text raise the reader's awareness of the nature and what are his or her connections to it?

These are part of what makes eco-criticism environment friendly and makes it stand apart from other literary theories as it examines both the writers, texts and the entire ecosphere unlike other approaches. This is what we shall examine in T Obinkaram Echewa's *The Land's Lord*

### **Eco-critical Reading of T. Obinkaram Echewa's *The Land is Lord***

The novel *The Land's Lord* by Obinkaram Echewa is an interesting novel that begs for a fruitful eco-criticism discourse and reading. The novel from its beginning till the end involves the interplay between man and nature and how both are tied to each other. The novel examines the connection between man and nature and how man and nature affect each other in the world. The setting of the novel is in the heart of a village in Africa. The timing of the novel is very apt and relevant in the kind of story the writer sets out to tell. It was a story that recreates our traditional past, the time of our earliest contact with Europeans and the missionaries who came to bring civilization and the white men's religion to us. This was against our traditional belief and faith in our gods and idols that once replete our traditional

societies. The place was the very heart of an Africa town under the chains and shackles of barbarism, primitivism and deep rooted traditional belief in our natural religion and the worship of many gods, idols and all other items that were gods to our forefathers. The background is that of religious background which charged the scene for a deep and bloody religious conflict between the class of the natives, the worshippers of the idol, the land lords and the missionaries and their converts. These groups were locked up in years of hostility that led to several deaths and other tragic consequences witnessed in the novel.

Thus, the setting of the novel played a very active role in the working out of the narrative as it helps to shape the plot and the conflict between father Higler and his converts with the natives who were bent on upholding their traditional religious values against the teachings of the white man. The struggle was fierce and bloody and in the end, it claimed the life of Philip, one of the most trusted servants and cook to father Higler. He was a catechist of the new church but in the traditional realm he was the chosen priest of njoku, a god of the people. His calling was to succeed the dead priest of njoku but Philip went against the wishes of his community and accepted the position of a catechist in a missionary church. This situation made Philip a walking shadow in his community. The demands of the two conflicting religion placed an unseen heavy burden on his shoulders. He was greatly burdened by his role as a catechist and a cook in the Christian church and at the same time, his abandoned rightful position as the chief priest of njoku. Towards the end of the novel, these two conflicting sides of himself began to take make heavy demands on him and weighed him down the more. This situation finally drove Philip to the height of insanity which climaxed the moment he slept with his 'betrothed daughter', a situation the natives considered an abomination. The penalty was death. Philip in his rage and insanity and his determination to revenge and cut some pounds of flesh from the two religions that destroyed his being engaged in several actions that were abominable on the side of the two religions. First, he slept with his betrothed daughter as a way of getting at the natives. He also desecrated the tabernacle in the missionary all in his struggle to get back at the two religions that struggled for his soul ad destroyed him. All father Higler's effort to save him at the scene of his final trial by the natives proved abortive. Philip, during the bizarre and dangerous sequence of events that trailed his finally trial in the community was fully aware of the penalty of death that awaits the end of his trial. In his fury, he managed to get hold of a machete and with that machete he took his life in other to escape being killed by the natives. The priest, father Higler on his part fled to the forest for his safety. He was later rescued from being drowned in a river by the old man Ahamba, a chief priest on the traditional society who represents in the African culture what father Higler represent in the European culture. Father Higler was almost destroyed and it was the setting on the novel that aided those conflicts and the tragic end of the story.

In examining the relationship between man and nature as portrayed in the novel, one is bound to have so many bad-feelings towards nature as the novel portrayed nature as an agent of destruction, an oppressor, and a destroyer. The novel depicts nature as an agent of conspiracy in the destruction and frustration of mankind. Nature in the novel played a pivotal role in the downfall of man and instead of being an object of pleasure and relief, it became an object of doom, fear, oppression and destruction as man is depicted in his continual struggle to survive against the dictates, whims and caprices of nature. Nature threatens every little peace and calmness in the lives of the people as depicted in the novel. But it is worthwhile to note that this depiction is simply rooted in the European's bias view and feelings about Africa which was represented in the viewpoints and postulations of Rev. Father Higler, a white priest sent into the hinterlands of Africa to bring them salvation and redeem them from that lives of primitively, barbarism and archaism. This view about the violent and hostile nature is from

the depiction of father Higler the white priest; these are experiences and perceptions that are quite different from the native's perception of nature and their natural environment. Irrespective of all this, the novel is replete with man and his connection with nature, which either in the positive or negative dimension rests on the shoulders of an eco-critic to unveil for a deeper understanding of several hidden meanings in the text. The writer was environmental friendly and never lost sight of the environment and natural landscape as well as the elements of the eco-system in his writing. The novel shares a rooted affinity with nature which echoed in many pages of the novel. As early as the beginning of the story, the writer depicted nature and natural activities as they live out their roles in the human world. The writer recreates thus:

The sun was falling; the shadows were lengthening. The forest sat there as ever on either side of him, riotously green and festering with shadows and mysteries the sun never penetrated. Animals tame and wild headed home from the day's foraging. In the village hut complexes just behind him, there were the measured tones of pestles pounding on the contents of hollow markers. Supper smoke rose out of numerous kitchens and curled skywards like so many sacrifices to the pagan gods. Then there was the mission, a spot of enforced baldness, a tonsure on the green jungle, which was kept at bay temporarily by a fence. But the jungle loathed any breaches of its dominion, and never relented in its efforts to digest, absorb and re-integrate everything into itself. Dried fence posts were quickly consumed by hordes of white termites. Others sprouted and grew into luxuriant bushes, and soon became part of what they were supposed to keep in check. Seeded bird droppings germinated on the thatch roof of the rectory. Where Phillip's kitchen and woodshed leaked, weeds exploded out of the damp flow.

(1)

This is Father Higler's view and observation of the African environment around him. The activities of nature and the connectedness of man and his natural environment from the point of view of father Higler is simply a parasitic relationship as nature only absorbs and destroys, and gives nothing in return. Nature from the above is not friendly to man. The idea of the forest being 'riotously green and festering with shadows and mysteries the sun never penetrated' portrays the enigmatic and mysterious nature of the African forests. The rising of the smokes and the activities of the jungle, all are bad signs and negative contributions. Then the termites that eat the dried fence and the fence that grew into luxuriant bushes and became source of fear and danger rather which was the opposite of what the fence ought to do; the droppings of the birds and all are all the destructive effects of nature on the peace, harmony and survival of man. This role of nature is well depicted further by the writer thus:

...and then he whirled around. A Mephistophelian presence had been hovering just behind his shoulder, an incubus of his fears... but the place and its inhabitants subscribed to a different order of logic. They never tried to push the jungle back, but rather found little places for themselves within it. They had it around them breathing its noxious odours, pulsing and churning with malaria and yellow fever... the ringworm ran happy circles on the heads of the children. Roaches, lizards, geckos in their houses did not seem to bother them. They seem inured to even the flies and the mosquitoes-all of them made of the

same primordial stuff- the people, the forest, and the other denizens of the forest-unfinished, unrefined and unreconstituted nature... (4)

This is another of father Higler's portrayal of the environment as an agent of fear, discomfort and disharmony to man. The forest and the natural elements became the central source of man's destruction; the streams produce ringworms that drew 'happy circles on the heads of the children.' Lizard and roaches live with man and cause their own level of harm. The environment produces a nauseating and obnoxious smell that is to man's discomfort. Then the mosquitoes and others continue to spread malaria, yellow fever and all kinds of diseases. Nature is described as 'unfinished', 'unrefined' and 'unreconstituted' and the realization of the fact that the natives cope with these agents of destructions all around them was a wonder to the white priest. All these connote the adverse and destructive effects of nature. The writer continues to depict nature and its destructive and oppressive forces as perceived by father Higler thus:

The sky had been drenching fire that first day, the sun seemingly having abandoned its assigned perch millions of miles away and descended to a point just above the tree tops. From there it had spewed fire on everything, a big dripping ball of liquid metal. Such heat, he was told, was rather unseasonable, the worst of the heat was supposed to be over, but heat was never really unseasonable here. His throat had been parched, his mouth gummy, his ears humming... there had been the endless, almost changeless green forest on either side of the roads... trees bearded and tentacled, faking the shapes of monsters, a silent, brooding ubiquitous presence just off the converse of the eyes, sinister spirits trespassing into reality when the face was tuned elsewhere. A preserved replica of what the world might have been before the spit of God passed over it, he could not ignore the warnings he had so pointedly received, the infinite list of tropical diseases in the air, water and soil, each waiting to make short shift of his apostleship.... (47)

The above is part of father Higler's perception of nature which if we judge by his experience, and point of view, we can conclude indeed that nature is evil, mean, cruel and heartless. The sun literally left his position miles away in the sky to shine directly on humans and destroy their peace. The heat was unbearable. Trees and forests are in the shapes of monsters threatening and oppressing. The environment is filled with tropical diseases which are in the African air, water, soil and all of them were struggling to claim the soul of the young priest. Nature does not comfort but destroys. It does not appease but irritates and molest man in his environment. From father Higler's position in the novel, nature is something man cannot wait to do away with as it only brings sorrow and hardship rather than comfort and joy. It is a big stumbling stone in the way of man's survival. Even when father Higler tried to keep a garden as a way of maintain any level of link and connection with nature, the effort was threatened and the aim defeated as nature rose again to destroy all for the priest. The writer reports this thus:

The season advanced. The harmattan blew harder and colder. Dust rose wild swirls and then settled on the vegetation like a brown coat. Lip cracked; skins scaled. Father Higler's flowers died in spite of frequent watering and his other attentive care, the balsams first, then the zinnia; the canna lily produced large clusters of stunted shoots with no buds. (64)

Father Higler was ready to identify and connect with nature but from the expositions of the writer, nature was the least interested in such 'mutual' unity. Nature does not in any way wish to extend any 'arm of friendship' to man and was all out to complete his task of destruction. Father Higler failed in his attempt to connect with nature by raising a garden. The garden was destroyed by the 'vicious' harmattan that 'crack lips and scale skins'. Such was the destructive power of nature which replete the novel. Irrespective of this, father Higler continued to try in his effort to provide a common ground between him and African nature and environment. He was ready to give his own part to make such union of man and nature possible. He had rebuilt the garden and planted new flowers in his effort to unite with nature, but once again nature descended with 'her claws' and wrecked all his efforts and drawing the battle line straight once again. The writer depicted this attempt, struggle and defeat in these words:

Father Higler was in his garden as the sun dipped behind the trees. With the recent rains the ground exploded with a new growth of weeds, which dwarfed his young balsams and marigolds. He pulled the weeds off with more than a gardener's zeal, for he saw them not just as vagrant plant growth but as agents of the evil land bent on making his life difficult and his labours fruitless. He pulled them energetically and shook the nourishing earth from their exposed roots, and then flung them as far as he could into the bush.... (105)

This is a depiction of man's constant battle with the forces of nature. First, it was harmattan, now the rain, all of them conspiring together and trying to break his little connection and affinity with nature. Father Higler knew that he has to give nature a little fight to safeguard not just his garden but himself. That was why he did not remove the weeds in his garden like a gardener; rather he removed them with some measures of violence and struggle. The priest was fully convinced that they were not ordinary weeds, but 'agents of the evil land bent on destroying him and frustrating his mission in Africa. That was why he uprooted them with great violence and bitterness to safeguard himself from the ever looming disaster emanating from nature. But sad enough, all these various depiction of nature are from the view of father Higler who unarguably, was bias and Eurocentric about his views of Africa and the African environment. We realize sadly from father Higler's expositions that it wasn't all natural elements in the world that were oppressive, it was only the nature and environment of the African continent. This idea is rooted in the deep Eurocentric and bias views of the Europeans about the African continent. They view Africa as the very heart of darkness and a jungle of primitive men quite different from the golden, ever-green and natural landscape of Europe. There is fear, darkness, and evil in African's natural environment but there is a whole of warmth, comfort, harmony and swelling pleasure in the European natural environment. The writer depicted this bias views and opinions thus:

... He struggled with all his strength to conjure God down, to fetch him from heaven into the mud-walled, thatched-roof chapel. God, however remained elsewhere far away – as far away it seemed to belong more appropriately in Europe, to fit nicely and naturally ... Those cathedrals, many of them with rosters of canonized saints securely in heaven, seemed natural enough places to find God. On the other hand, seemed to have created Africa and fled from its heat and its jungles and from the savages.... (26)

This is father Higler's dissection of the African environment. God, he believes resides in Europe as a result of her warmth and serenity and the beauties of her natural environment, landscape and atmosphere. God from his perception fled from Africa as a result of the heat and savagery. Father Higler continued in his depiction of the African environment in contrast of Europe in these words and imageries:

So this was the Africa he had dreamt about in the last few years, and had sought in his wildest imaginings to recreate mentally in the tame, hallowed and cloistered and civilized English countryside ... Even the air on Saint Mary's grounds seemed to be enriched by God's special beneficence, purified and blessed – an island of holiness and tranquility. During the spring the flowers and shrubs grew as if they received from God more than the usual compliments of showers and sunshine. Blossoms were large, influences spectacular. It comes to leap from those grounds to this pagan place where the very trees looked sinister and bedeviled! It was like getting a swimming lesson in a sterilized swimming pool and then being cast into a mire pit. There was no protection here, no wall or fence or outer defence perimeter.... (49)

From this view of Higler, the European nature is the very perfect nature. The natural element grew and blossom in perfection and in worship of God. The landscape is refined and orderly. Everything is simply perfect and irresistible. Man is united with nature in European towards a common cause, survival and harmony. Nature is source of life, beauty, comfort, freedom and peace of mind but only in Europe could one find such comfort in nature. The African nature is doomed and cursed and is a threat to man's survival and adaptation on earth. The writer summed up father Higler's view of African environment in these words:

Africa had burst upon him, no longer with the romance that was due to distance, no longer with the hazy perception derived from books. This was the real thing. The tropical sun puffed its hellish breath; the steam – chamber atmosphere stifled breathing. The mosquitoes and tsetse flies were real; and so were the half-naked natives. The storms. The darkness. He had brought a faith here, a saving faith. (140)

This sums up father Higler's view of Africa and his depiction of African natural landscape. Everything is in state of disorder and constitutes a deep rooted obstruction to man survivals but ironically the Africans do not share this view of father Higler. Their African environment is safe and beautiful. Nature is kind to man and man is connected to nature. That was why Philip once replied to father Higler's fear about him walking in the darkness in these words: 'Fada, the road is safe. The darkness is empty. There is nothing in it. (51) The African nature is indeed empty and free and not guilty of father Higler's accusations of her environment. There are more to the environment than what father Higler expressed. The land, the environment, man and nature are all connected and had together in one common cause and none can exist perfectly without the other. Old Ahamba explained this connection in these touchy words:

Let the night winds, the hovering spirits of our ancestors, these hallowed forests and trees, that assemblage of gods, the moon, sky and stars and this sacred soil from which we all derive – speak that they may hear you. Justify yourself. Justify your life. (136)

From the above, Ahamba expressed the idea that man and nature are tied together in a just and common cause. From father Higler's view, African nature is destructive and oppressive but Ahamba projects a different view of the African nature and environment shared by Africans who knew and understand their roles and affinity to nature and their natural environment which is tied to their collective survival as a people. The African people tap from the resources of their natural environment and resources which nourish and protect them and in the end, with an inter-play of connection; the Africans are untied and tied to their environment towards the struggle for survival and fulfilled existence. This is not just an afrocentric view of African environment but a realistic part of the African flora and fauna which the Europeans have to accept and acknowledge for the restoration and preservation of the true values of the African continent.

### CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

This study sets out to examine the European perception of the African environment as expressed in Obinkaram Echewa's *The Land's Lord*. From our discussion so far, we decipher the European rather bias view and perception of the African continent. One of the problems of the African continent has been traced to the problem of ill and bias perception of Africa by the Europeans. The Europeans basking in the euphoria of their achievement and civilization often cast aspersion on the African continent as a 'dark continent' with deep rooted belief that nothing good could possibly emanate from the continent. The idea of inferiority of African goods and products in various competitive markets even in Africa is traceable to the negligence of African natural resources and products as inferior and illicit during the time of colonial contact between the Africans and the Europeans. This study is necessary at a time when the world is showing collective interest in environmental and ecological issues. Man's actions in various parts of the earth are located to be parts of the anomalies that could lead to his destruction. Man's constant abuse of nature is capable of leading to man's destruction. All around us we are familiar with news of man's constant pollution and looting of his environment. Environmental degradation, air pollution emanating from environmental abuse, oil spillage, industrial emissions, toxic and nuclear wastes are among the major examples of man's constant abuse of nature which threatens his continual survival and existence in the world. All these are becoming serious global issues which literature has identified itself in the struggle to provide the much needed balance and complimentarily existence between man and his environment. On the other hand, nature is also often perceived in some extreme circumstances to be detrimental to man's survival. Natural occurrences like earth quake, hurricane, eruptions, floods, tornadoes among other adverse effects of nature are part of the negative abuse of man by nature. These are part of the changing circumstances human beings will continue to fashion out ways to cope with.

This study has clearly shown the Eurocentric perception of the African environment as depicted in the novel under discourse. Father Higler in the novel is a prototype and representation of the Europeans and their Eurocentric perception of the African environment. From father Higler's account, the African flora and fauna are such unfriendly environment, callous and destructive in all accounting. One would have agreed with father Higler if nature across the world is viewed with rather negative eyes, but that was not so as the writer had exposed. One would disagree with this perception of the African environment From father Higler's exposition, because we realize that it wasn't all natural elements in the world that was oppressive, it was only the nature and environment of the African continent which is part of the Eurocentric and bias views of the Europeans about the African continent. They view Africa as the very heart of darkness and a jungle of primitive man quite different from the

golden and natural landscape of Europe. There is fear, darkness, and evil in African's natural environment but there is a whole of warmth, comfort, harmony and swelling pleasure in the European natural environment. The European world is the ideal and perfect environment as perceived by the white priest in the novel. It is in Europe that God resides since He could not withstand the heat in Africa, as father Higler projected in the novel. But from the viewpoint of the writer, we can infer from the writer's perspective that the African environment is not destructive and callous but ideal, friendly and life-preserving. One can therefore, conclude that if Europeans have the perfect and ideal culture from their perspectives, Africans too have their own golden and harmonious environment which their black skins were shaped to identify and connect with forever. The environment gives life to the Africa. People and the future are tied to the land. That was also the symbolism of Philip's death and father Higler's near destruction as the land rose to defend an abomination meted on him by man. Thus, this is the symbolic relationship of man and nature from a deep and rooted Afro centric view of the African environment and ecosystem.

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