

ECOCRITICAL REFLECTIONS IN AHMED YERIMA'S *HARD GROUND*: ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSES AND THE PLATEAU STATE EXPERIENCE

Obidah Solomon Yamma
Department of Theatre Arts
Plateau State University, Bokokos
solomonobidah@plasu.edu.ng

&

Fwang'an, Jerry Bako
Department of Theatre Arts,
Plateau State University, Bokokos.
jerrybako@plasu.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper offers an ecocritical interrogation of Hard Ground by Ahmed Yerima, situating the play within contemporary environmental discourse in Nigeria and extending its relevance to Plateau State. The paper is anchored on the premise that dramatic literature serves as a critical medium for articulating ecological crises and interrogating the socio-political structures that sustain them. The objectives of the study are threefold: to examine the representation of environmental degradation in Hard Ground; to analyze the relationship between ecological crisis and socio-political instability; and to establish the play's relevance to environmental challenges in Plateau State. The study adopts an ecocritical theoretical framework and employs qualitative textual analysis. Primary data is derived from the dramatic text, while secondary data is drawn from recent scholarly works in ecocriticism, African theatre, and environmental humanities. The methodology is interpretative and analytical, allowing for a contextual reading of environmental representation in drama. Findings reveal that Hard Ground foregrounds ecological devastation—manifested through oil spills, water contamination, and loss of livelihoods—as a catalyst for social unrest and militancy in the Niger Delta. The study further demonstrates that these environmental anxieties resonate strongly with the realities of Plateau State, where issues such as deforestation, overgrazing, poor sanitation, and abandoned mining sites continue to threaten ecological sustainability and human survival. The play thus transcends its geographical setting, functioning as a national allegory of environmental crisis. The study concludes that theatre remains a potent instrument for environmental advocacy and social transformation. It recommends integrating ecodramatic texts into environmental policy discourse and community-based awareness programmes to promote sustainable development.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Ecodrama, Environmental Crisis, Nigerian Theatre, Plateau State

Introduction

Drama has historically functioned as a mirror of society, reflecting its tensions, contradictions, and aspirations. In contemporary African theatre, environmental degradation has emerged as a critical thematic concern, particularly in response to the ecological crises confronting the continent. Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground* exemplifies this shift, offering a compelling dramatization of the

Niger Delta crisis and its human consequences. Theatre, in some instances, has used allegory to demonstrate the injuries that human activities are causing to the flora and fauna in our ecosystem.(Etale & Etale, 2025).

The play, *Hard Ground*, interrogates the intersection of environmental exploitation, political marginalization, and violent resistance. It presents a society where ecological destruction has disrupted traditional livelihoods, leading to social dislocation and insurgency. Scholars note that such dramatic representations expose “governance failure and environmental degradation as drivers of conflict” in the Niger Delta.

Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground* is a great contribution to the repertoire of plays on Nigeria. The play expresses sensitivity to the Socio-cultural realities of the environment. It establishes that a playwright's social vision is inextricably linked to the concerns of his society. One of the major causes of conflict in the Niger Delta region is the activities of oil companies operating there. Despite the contributions of the people to the development of the Nigerian State, the region has remained largely underdeveloped in social infrastructure, particularly healthcare facilities. Worse still, their land is deprived and destroyed. This ecological devastation and total oppression of the people, especially in the denial of their rights, including land rights, in the region.

This shows that the theatre's functionality is no longer in doubt, as many people have come to realise its developmental potency. It has the power to influence thought and opinion and can serve as a popular and effective means of political propagation, economic empowerment, and cultural diffusion. In fact, it is a medium through which the soul of man readies itself beyond itself to transform (Milan Kroulik,2024). Before we delve into the discussion proper, we are going to look at the plot summary of the play *Hard Ground* for better understanding and clarification.

While the play is geographically situated in the Niger Delta, its thematic concerns resonate beyond the region. Environmental degradation is not confined to oil-producing areas; it is a pervasive national issue. Plateau State, for instance, faces significant ecological challenges arising from mining activities, deforestation, and unsustainable land use. This study, therefore, extends the analysis of *Hard Ground* to examine its relevance in the Plateau context.

Theoretical Conceptions: Ecocriticism and Ecodrama

The study is grounded in **ecocriticism**, an interdisciplinary approach that examines the relationship between literature and the environment. Ecocriticism challenges anthropocentric worldviews and advocates a more sustainable interaction between humans and nature. Recent scholarship emphasizes that African ecocriticism critiques the “human domination of nature” and calls for a mutualistic relationship between humans and the environment. This perspective is particularly relevant in postcolonial contexts where environmental exploitation is often linked to historical and neo-colonial economic structures. Ecodrama, a subset of ecocriticism, focuses on theatrical representations of environmental issues. It explores how performance can raise ecological awareness and inspire social change. Theatre scholars argue that ecodrama not only represents environmental crises but also serves as a tool for advocacy and resistance. Within this framework, *Hard Ground* can be read as an ecodramatic text that critiques environmental injustice while highlighting the human cost of ecological degradation.

Literature Review

Recent studies on *Hard Ground* have emphasised its engagement with environmental and socio-political issues. For instance, Yerima & Mark (2021) identify the play as a critique of injustice, corruption, and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta, linking these issues to environmental exploitation. Similarly, Lawal (2020) examines the play through the lens of internal colonialism, arguing that it exposes the exploitation of local communities by both the state and multinational corporations. This perspective underscores the structural dimensions of environmental degradation.

Other scholars have focused on the relationship between environmental crisis and violence. Tekena (2021) argues that the trauma resulting from ecological destruction contributes to insurgency and social unrest, as individuals respond to marginalization and economic deprivation. Recent ecocritical studies further highlight the role of theatre in environmental discourse. Chidi-Igbokwe et al. (2023) observe that ecodramatic texts expose “social injustice and dysfunctional socio-political structures” that perpetuate environmental crises.

Despite these contributions, there is limited scholarship linking *Hard Ground* to environmental issues in Plateau State. This study addresses this gap by extending the ecocritical analysis beyond the Niger Delta.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on textual and contextual analysis. The methodology involves:

- **Primary Source:** *Hard Ground* by Ahmed Yerima
- **Secondary Sources:** Scholarly publications (2005–2025) in theatre studies, ecocriticism, and environmental studies

The analytical approach is interpretative, focusing on thematic exploration of environmental issues in the play. A comparative framework is also employed to relate the Niger Delta experience to environmental realities in Plateau State.

Plot

Nimi has dropped out of school because he is on a mission to become a child soldier to fight for his people. Child soldiering is a criminal act of younger people brutalizing other people and stealing away young, innocent girls. They lose their humanity. There is no longer any law for such children. This is where Nimi belongs, as he drops out of school to take up arms to emancipate his people. Things grow worse. Not too long, the tables are turned against them. He is accused of masterminding the death of Don's boys, and for this reason, Don is after his life.

After being rescued by his parents, who had paid the ransom, Nimi is warned not to return to the jungle, or Don and his faction will kill him. However, because of his love for Pikobo, his new love, now with his baby, Nimi, cannot help but dream of seeing his wife and child.

Many playwrights have written plays about political and social issues faced in our societies, but very few playwrights have considered the environmental issues faced in society. It is good to deal

with issues such as bribery and corruption, child abuse, the family, and so on, but what about environmental pollution and so many other issues of the degradation of the environment? The lack of attention to the environment has done more harm than good to our lives as a society, leading to the development of a new course in the Theatre called Eco-drama.

Ecodrama stages the reciprocal connection between humans and the more-than-human world; it encompasses not only works that address environmental issues, seeking to raise consciousness or press for change, but also those that explore the relationship between a "sense of place" and identity and community. We have notable playwrights who have taken it upon themselves to write plays addressing ecological issues, such as Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground*.

Analysis of the Play: *Hard Ground*

The work is a critique of contemporary issues in the Niger Delta and warrants further critical attention. The play has attracted attention in the Niger Delta and deals with the topical and painful issues in the region, which has been rendered useless for farming by oil exploration. The Niger Delta is boiling and on the brink of becoming a national disaster. The topicality of the play, therefore, makes it a classic. The play deals with the oil spillage that caused environmental pollution in the communities of the Niger Delta. This is because the ground was hard; people could not cultivate their land, preventing them from farming and causing a food shortage in the community. Because of the shortage in the food supply, there is a sharp increase in the prices of goods in the market, which leads to survival of the fittest, as only the rich can afford them. In contrast, people with low incomes have no option but to manage what they have.

Another major challenge facing the Niger Delta region is water pollution. There is an adage that says, "Water is life." A person may survive without food, but cannot survive without water, because without water, a person can dehydrate to death. Humans, plants, and animals need water to survive. Water pollution in the Niger Delta is a serious problem because its water is contaminated with petroleum waste, rendering it unfit for consumption and other water-dependent activities. So many people have died because of the contamination of water in the Niger Delta region, and some are sick because they have no choice but to consume the contaminated water, which is dangerous to the body.

Oil spills are a common sight in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, and several communities have suffered devastating effects. At the end, it is the local communities located around such oil installations that bear the brunt. The spills are caused by several factors, including poorly maintained infrastructure located around a high-pressure oil pipeline. When accidents occur, these pipelines get damaged and spill their contents. Again, activities at oil bunkers, where local people break into pipelines and wells to steal their contents, have damaged pipelines and caused leaks. In many cases, the equipment and facilities of oil multinationals often fail due to poor maintenance.

Recently, fishermen operating off the shoreline in Akwa Ibom State, near Mobil Producing Nigeria's "Qua Ibae" oil field, raised alarm over the safety and health implications of oil-contaminated fish in the area. The fishermen confirmed that they have been suffering for many years at the hands of Mobil Producing Nigeria due to their frequent oil spills. The fishing industry

is essential for sustainability because it provides much-needed protein and nutrients for people, but demand for fish is rising. Fish populations are declining because they are being depleted faster than they can replenish their numbers. Overfishing affects not only marine communities.

Climate change, habitat loss, and pollution are additional pressures on the important ecosystems mentioned above. The banks of the Niger River are desirable locations for people to settle. The river provides water for drinking, bathing, cooking, cleaning, and fishing for both food and training to make a profit. As people have settled along riverbanks and coasts, marine and terrestrial habitats are being lost, and ecosystems are being drastically altered.

Drama deals with the realities of life, what happens in our day-to-day societies. Aristotle defines drama as ‘‘the imitation of an action which is true to life but not life itself. Though I agree with the definition, when we imitate these true-to-life actions, our main aim should be to improve and overcome the issues we imitate, bringing positive change to our society; otherwise, our drama will be useless because it will have no impact.

In this order, Ahmed Yerima’s *Hard Ground* addresses contemporary issues, and the goal and essence of this beautiful play is to provide a lasting solution to the issues it raises. *Hard Ground* not only addresses issues faced in the Niger Delta but also environmental issues across the country, and we will discuss environmental problems in Plateau State as a case study.

The Relevance of Ahmed Yerima’s *Hard Ground* in Relation to the Environmental Problems on the Plateau

The play *Hard Ground* not only deals with the problems in the Niger Delta but also serves as a prerequisite to other environmental problems across Nigeria and Africa at large. Nature has richly endowed Plateau State with scenic beauty. Mostly rocky and cold, the State contains chains of hills and many interesting rock formations. The landscape ranges from bare rocks to artificial hillocks (resulting from mining) to deep gorges and volcanic table mountains such as those found around Kuru in Jos and the eastern part of Pankshin Local Government Area.

The Plateau provides a hydrological head to many rivers in the Northern State, notably the River Kaduna, whose sources emerge between the villages of Assak and Katakayinye in the district of Bassa Local Government Area. Several of those rivers are fast-flowing and have, in the process, developed into picture-perfect waterfalls. Best known of these are Assop and Farin Ruwa falls, which are popular holiday and picnic destinations, especially on weekends. With its beauty, it also faces environmental issues that need to be tackled to advance the State's development. The essence of every society or community is to have healthy, good people who make up its population. Still, when the health of its people is endangered, there is a problem with that community or society.

In this case, we will discuss environmental issues that have affected Plateau State (and continue to affect it) to identify positive solutions that will advance the State's development and benefit its inhabitants. Under this, we are going to discuss some challenges in the Plateau environs: overgrazing, Deforestation, Sanitation, and Failed Mining Sites.

Analysis of Environmental Representation in *Hard Ground*

Environmental Degradation as Central Motif

At the heart of *Hard Ground* is the depiction of ecological devastation. The title itself symbolizes the land's barrenness, rendered infertile by oil pollution. The environment is not merely a backdrop but an active force shaping human experiences. Oil spills contaminate farmlands and water sources, leading to economic hardship and food insecurity. The inability to farm or fish disrupts traditional livelihoods, creating a sense of despair among the people.

Water Pollution and Public Health Crisis

The play highlights the contamination of water bodies, which has severe implications for public health. Access to clean water becomes a major challenge, forcing communities to rely on polluted sources. This aligns with broader environmental realities, in which water pollution is linked to disease outbreaks and a decline in quality of life.

Environmental Degradation and Militancy

One of the most significant themes in the play is the link between environmental degradation and violence. The character of Nimi represents a generation driven to militancy by frustration and marginalization. Scholars note that such unrest is often rooted in environmental injustice and governance failure. The play thus presents militancy as both a symptom and a consequence of ecological crisis.

Environmental Challenges in Plateau State: A Comparative Perspective **Overgrazing and Land Degradation**

Overgrazing has become a major environmental issue in Plateau State. Excessive livestock grazing leads to soil erosion and reduced agricultural productivity. This has contributed to farmer-herder conflicts, reflecting the resource-based tensions depicted in *Hard Ground*.

This occurs when plants are subjected to intensive grazing for extended periods or without sufficient recovery time. Either livestock can cause it in poorly managed agricultural settings, or overpopulation of native or non-native animals. Basically, the presence of too many animals on the land for too long, or at inappropriate times, causes rangeland degradation, thereby reducing the land's quality and quantity. Overgrazing of upland and riparian vegetation reduces the land's usefulness, productivity, and biodiversity, and contributes to desertification and erosion.

Plateau State has its own share of overgrazing due to the influx of Fulani herders seeking greener pastures for their cattle. This has led to erosion in some parts of the State, as soil nutrients are gradually being washed away, significantly affecting the agricultural sector. Plateau State is known for its agricultural activities. The average Plateau man's occupation is farming, but overgrazing has recently reduced productivity in the Agricultural Sector. Recently, in Bokkos Local Government, known for potato farming, potato production was low in some areas because the soil had been affected, and most of the crops dried up before harvest. We have similar cases in other Local Governments, caused by either erosion or overgrazing.

In the play *Hard Ground*, issues were raised, and large-scale overgrazing is not left out, as it is also an environmental problem that needs attention, just as in the case of the oil spillage in the Niger Delta region. Overgrazing has not only brought about backwardness in Agricultural production, but it has also caused clashes between the Fulani herdsman and the farmers in Plateau State, which has claimed many lives and caused havoc in the state. Farmers are being attacked on their farmlands and also in their homes and killed like animals as most farmers are now leaving in fear because of the insecurity, because the herdsman nowadays, do not use their sticks for rearing their cattle, instead, they use dangerous weapons to kill and harm innocent people, the only crime these innocent people have committed is giving out their lands free of charge to these herdsmen.

Indigene-settler conflicts are not new to Nigeria. Since 2001, violence has erupted in Jos City, the capital of Plateau State in Nigeria's Middle Belt. The ostensible dispute is over the right of the indigene Beriom, Anaguta/Afizere group, and the rival claims of the Hausa-Fulani settlers to land, power, and resources. Indigene-settler conflicts are not new to Nigeria, especially in Plateau State.

The indigene principle, or indiginity (that is, local origin), means that some groups control power and resources in State or local government areas. In contrast, others, who have migrated for different reasons, are excluded. This gives rise both to grievances and fierce political competition, which too often lead to violence. Indiginity was given constitutional force at independence in 1960 to protect the ethnic minorities from being submerged by the large Fulani groups and preserve their cultural and political identity.

Struggles over land ownership, economic resources, and political control tend to be expressed not just in ethnic but also regional terms because the settlers are almost entirely Muslims and indigenous people predominantly Christians. The dispute is compounded by the fact that, of the settled groups, only the Hausa-Fulani lay proprietary claim to Jos. As violence recurs, spatial polarization and segregation accentuate social and political divisions, people become more conscious of their sub-national solidarity and allegiances, and are more forthcoming about expressing them.

Since the end of 2010, security has further deteriorated in Jos because of terror attacks and suicide bombings against Churches and security targets by suspected militants of Boko Haram, the Islamist group responsible for an unprecedented wave of terrorist attacks in the north. Thousands have been killed, hundreds of thousands have been displaced internally, and properties worth billions of Naira have been destroyed.

Deforestation and Climate Change

Deforestation in Plateau State has resulted in a significant ecological imbalance. The loss of forest cover contributes to rising temperatures and reduced rainfall, threatening biodiversity and food security. Ogundele and Adebisi (2016) opine that deforestation is the permanent destruction of forests and woodlands. While the phenomenon is not new, the current scale and pace of destruction are alarming. They go ahead to say that tropical forests are disappearing at a rate of about 13 million hectares per year.

These magnitudes of destruction affect not only the local level but also the global level. Tropical forests are home to much of the planet's biodiversity, hosting half of all known species. Cutting down forests not only threatens the extinction of a diverse range of plants and animals but also causes climate disruption. Mackenzie and Denchak (2025) state that deforestation accounts for about 20% of global CO₂ emissions, making it a major contributor to climate change. Together with forest degradation, it also threatens the cultural integrity and way of life of people who depend on forests for their livelihoods. The process continues because alternative land uses usually bring increased economic revenues in the short term, which is why the deforestation rate remains so high. Desert encroachment is a natural phenomenon that man can also cause through massive felling of trees.

Most states in Nigeria are affected by deforestation. In view of the fact that most ordinary homes in the North depend on firewood for cooking, the rampant felling of trees frustrates efforts by state forest and anti-desert-encroachment programmes to eliminate the menace. Plateau State, known for its cold climate, is gradually becoming hotter, a change driven by the constant felling of trees in the region. Humans destroy themselves by cutting down trees. The climate, especially in Plateau State, changes drastically due to rising carbon dioxide levels. However, many people do not realise the damage that is being done. Humans are the cause of deforestation. Any other factor, such as wildfires, prolonged drought, or climate change, only accelerates deforestation. Very few companies actually help the environment and develop strategies to prevent deforestation.

Trees give out oxygen, and because of them, we have rain. In short, they maintain the ecological balance. If we cut trees, what is going to happen is that the population won't stop growing, but oxygen in the atmosphere will be reduced. Another effect is food scarcity, which is associated with other problems, such as reduced rainfall leading to less water for irrigation. Less water for irrigation would result in lower harvests, which would, in turn, lead to less food, and if it continues for a long time, it might lead to a famine-like situation. Trees have to breathe to live, just like us and every living thing on the planet. They breathe in carbon dioxide and breathe out oxygen. We breathe out carbon dioxide and breathe in oxygen from the trees, which are the primary producers of oxygen. Without trees, we would not be here. Cutting down trees reduces the oxygen. If you cut down a tree but plant two new ones, that is fine. Trees are living things too. The most important thing is that trees are necessary for rain. Trees create the cold, humid atmosphere required for rain.

The rains are gradually ceasing in Plateau State and other parts of the country, and the atmosphere is also changing, becoming hotter than expected. This shows that something is wrong somewhere, and the reason is the indiscriminate felling of trees.

Poor Sanitation and Health Implications

Poor sanitation remains a critical issue in many parts of Plateau State. Inadequate waste management and contaminated water sources have led to recurrent outbreaks of diseases such as cholera. This underscores the interconnectedness of environmental degradation and public health. The World Health Organization states that:

Sanitation refers to the provision of facilities and services for the safe disposal of human urine and faeces. Inadequate sanitation is a major cause of disease worldwide, and

improving sanitation has a significant positive impact on health, both in households and across communities. This word “sanitation also refers to the maintenance of hygienic conditions, collection, and wastewater disposal (1).

Poor sanitation is one of the greatest challenges in Plateau State and has claimed the lives of so many people, arising from contaminated water, food, and poor sanitation conditions. Some streets, like Angwan Rogo, Rikkos, and Angwan Rim in Jos, the Plateau State Capital, are very unkempt, exposing residents to health risks. There are houses in the capital city built without toilets, so people in the area dispose of their waste wherever available, which causes further harm to the communities. There are no sewers or gutters to allow the free flow of water in areas such as Jenta Adamu, parts of Tudun-Wada, Angwan Rogo, etc. The poor sanitation has led to the problem of cholera outbreaks in the state, which has claimed a large number of lives.

Cholera remains a global threat to public health and a key indicator of a lack of social development. Recently, the re-emergence of cholera has been noted in parallel with the ever-increasing size of vulnerable populations living in unsanitary conditions. In this case, both the government and the people are to be blamed, because the government is supposed to provide good water and other social amenities to its people. In contrast, people are supposed to keep their environment clean. Most water taps around the city are dry, even after citizens have paid for water.

The former Governor, David Jonah Jang, had organised monthly sanitation in the State, and this was a good start. Subsequent governors ensured continuous efforts to eradicate cholera and other unsanitary-related diseases in the State.

The government is not to be blamed alone; the people living in the community are also to be held accountable, because some do not participate in sanitation efforts, some areas are very dirty and unkempt, and this poses a threat to the lives of the inhabitants. Dumping of refuse everywhere without burning or clearing it causes harm to the health of the people. On May 6th, 2014, a fresh outbreak of cholera was recorded in the Bakin and Ladi Local Governments and Jos South Local Government of Plateau State.

The outbreak was said to have occurred at the weekend when 17 victims were rushed to the health clinic in Bukuru, headquarters of Jos South Local Government. While medical experts were trying to combat the incident in Jos South LGA, the epidemic erupted in nearby Barkin Kadi LGA early Sunday Morning. Before noon, more than ten people were reported dead at the BarkinLadi General Hospital, while over 60 victims were admitted for treatment. Other Local Government Areas were also affected.

Abandoned Mining Sites

Mining activities have left behind degraded landscapes and hazardous environments. These abandoned sites contribute to soil erosion, water pollution, and loss of arable land. The environmental impact of mining in Plateau State mirrors the devastation caused by oil exploration in the Niger Delta. Sanitation is the hygienic practice of promoting health by preventing human contact with waste hazards and by treating and properly disposing of sewage and wastewater (Mackenzie J. & Denchak M., 2025). Mining is the extraction of valuable minerals or other

geological materials from the earth from an ore body, lodes, vein, seam, or reef, which forms the mineralised package of economic interest to the miner (Bagudu, 2001). The history and development of modern Plateau State are tied to the discovery and mining of deposits. In fact, activities related to tin mining in Plateau State can be traced back over 100 years (Gwom, 2001). In fact, one of the key drivers of the colonial invasion of African economies was the scramble for mining rights and concessions, as observed by Bagudu (2001:71).

Mining is one of the most dangerous occupations. Mining sites in the State have become dead traps for miners due to the lack of maintenance of facilities and the government's negligence. Some miners have been buried alive in mining grounds with nobody to rescue them. Again, another problem of mining is environmental damage, which has led to erosion, shortages, and low agricultural productivity. The release of toxic heap-leaching fluid into the environment can affect the health of both the surrounding ecosystem and the human population. (Chen et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the Grounds are in really bad shape and need serious, immediate attention before they get even worse and out of control. Something needs to be done to preserve the ecosystem.

Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground* is an eye-opener on other environmental challenges that must be addressed for human history to continue. From generation to generation, the ecosystem needs to be preserved, and human lives need to be saved; So many people have died and are still dying because of environmental pollution, only the living can tell the story.

Discussion

The analysis reveals that *Hard Ground* functions as a national allegory of environmental crisis. Though rooted in the Niger Delta, its themes apply to other regions, including Plateau State. The play highlights the structural nature of environmental degradation, linking it to bad governance, economic exploitation, and social injustice. It also underscores the human cost of ecological crisis, as individuals and communities struggle to survive in degraded environments. The comparative analysis demonstrates that environmental challenges in Plateau State share similar underlying causes and consequences. This reinforces the relevance of ecodramatic texts in understanding and addressing environmental issues.

Findings

The study establishes that:

- i. *Hard Ground* is a significant ecodramatic text that critiques environmental exploitation.
- ii. Environmental degradation is closely linked to socio-political instability and conflict.
- iii. The ecological issues depicted in the play are reflective of broader national realities.
- iv. Plateau State faces environmental challenges that parallel those of the Niger Delta.
- v. Theatre serves as an effective medium for environmental awareness and advocacy.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground* transcends its immediate context to offer a broader commentary on environmental crises in Nigeria. Through its ecodramatic lens, the play exposes the devastating impact of environmental degradation on human life and social stability. In Plateau State, the persistence of ecological challenges underscores the urgency of sustainable environmental practices. Addressing these issues requires a collaborative effort involving government, communities, and cultural practitioners. Theatre, as a powerful medium of

expression, plays a crucial role in this process. By raising awareness and provoking critical reflection, ecodramatic texts can contribute to the quest for environmental sustainability and social justice.

References

- Adeniyi, E., & Onanuga, P. (2024). Language, literature and the environment: Eco-criticism from African perspectives. *Green Letters*, 27(3), 263–268.
- Chen, H. B., Chen, H. M., Chen, Z. B., & Chen, Z. Q. (2023). The ecological impacts of residues from heap leaching of ion-adsorption rare-earth clays. *International Journal of Environmental Science and Technology*, 20(12), 13267–13276. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13762-023-04873-1>
- Chidi-Igbokwe, M. I. A., Eze, N. O., Igbonekwu, J., Aniago, E., & Abada, F. C. (2023). Eco-criticism, Niger Delta despoilment, and governance failure. *Agathos Journal*, 14(1), 191–210.
- Ekwueme-Ugwu, C. C., & Ugwuagbo, W. (2024). Ecocriticism in African literature: A reassessment. *Journal of the Literary Society of Nigeria*, 12(1).
- Etale, P. M., & Etale, L. M. (2025). Eco-theatre and Environmental Ethics in Rudolph Kansese's *Obeseri (Rumble in the Wild): Reimagining Performance for a Sustainable Future*. *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 13(3), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.37745/ejells.2013/vol13n32740>
- Lawal, N. A. (2020). Oil wealth, corruption, and internal colonialism in Yerima's *Hard Ground*. *Anafora Journal of Literary Studies*, 7(1), 165–187.
- Mackenzie J. & Denchak M. (2025). Deforestation and Forest Degradation: The Causes, Effects, and Solutions, <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/deforestation-forest-degradation-causes-effects-solutions> (Retrieved 2/5/2026).
- Ogundele & Adebisi (2016). 'Deforestation in Nigeria: The Need for Urgent Mitigating Measures.' In *Ilard International Journal of Geography and Environmental Management*, Vol. 2, No.1
- Ogundokun, S. A. (2025). *Hard Ground* as social criticism. *Al-Adab Journal*, 154, 33–48.
- Tekena, M. G. (2021). Trauma and insurgency in Nigerian drama. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing and World Literatures*, 2(1), 7–17.
- Udofia, A. F. (2024). Counter-discourse and power in *Hard Ground*. *International Review of Humanities Studies*, 9(1).
- Levin, J. (2018). *Beyond nature? Ecocritical approaches to literature*. Routledge.
- May, T. J. (2018). *Earth matters on stage: Ecodrama and environmental performance*. Routledge.
- Milan Kroulik (2024). *Ritualizing Media, Mediatizing Ritual: A Study on the Interaction of Media Technologies and Ritual Practice in Thai Rituals*. <https://hal.science/tel-04589782v2>

Yerima, A., & Mark, T. G. (2021). *Literatures World*. 2(1), 7–17.

Yerima, A. (2016). *Hard Ground*. Ibadan: Kraft Books.