

Dialogue and Legal Justice as Panaceas to the Oil Crises in the Niger Delta: Chimeka Garricks *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*

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ABSTRACT

This work investigates the Niger Delta crises especially the novelistic representations of the author, Chimeka Garricks to wit: environmental injustice, social injustice, environmental degradation, and ecological devastation. Using the frameworks of Ecocriticism by Cheryll Glotfelty and Ecological Imperialism by Alfred Crosby, the work tries to examine how the people of the Niger Delta have been subjected to a myriad of inhuman conditions and how they have tried to resist these conditions. Owing to the futility of the several strands of resistance from these individuals, the need for resort to dialogue and legal justice has, therefore become relevant to the people, as only that can ensure a more peaceful and sustainable society where the benefits would be equitably shared to match with the burdens.

KEYWORDS: Dialogue, Legal Justice, Chimeka Garricks, *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*

INTRODUCTION

Tomorrow Died Yesterday is a descriptive literary exposition of the predatory economic activities among the Niger Delta stakeholders; the Nigerian government, the oil companies, the Niger Delta statesmen, and the indigenous militants. But, unlike Dan Amadi's *The Trial of the Militants* (a play) where the militants trial ends as the "triumph of the rule of law" (Blurb), Garricks' fictive story of the Asiamas oil rich community in the region exposes, among many other things, how the Nigerian government attempts to orchestrate or exploit its "legal system" to the detriment of an activist who is not a militant. The plot is woven around two major characters with contradictory political prescriptions for the region's crises; Amaibi and Doye Koko popularly known by the nickname, Doughboy. Each of these two principal characters somewhat represents an ideological niche such that will enable the author probe into the enigmatic politics of the region. Doughboy is the leader of the militant group known as the Asiamas Freedom Army (AFA). His mythic ruthlessness provides him the reputation of

invincibility built around a charade of bullet-defying charms. Unknown to the public, he uses this psychological apparatus, according to him, as “a very effective way of sowing terror in the hearts of men” which also “fuelled wild rumours and added to my myth: my own manipulation of my publicity” (5). This ruthless impunity resonates, in a symbolic manner, how restive youths attempt to emulate their political leaders who recklessly embezzle the national treasury with impunity as well.

On the other hand, Amaibi’s role as an activist seeks for dialogue with the government as a means of settling the dilemma in the region. Regrettably, he is forced to undergo a great deal of government sponsored persecutions for attempting to question the government’s exploitative interest in the region. This conspiracy is exposed in the novel by Sir James, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), thus: “The government wants Amaibi out of the way. In this county the government is the mafia. Everything has been arranged. The trial will be merely to rubberstamp his predetermined conviction. And the rest, as they say, will be history” (69). Elsewhere in the novel Sir James gives more insight in regards to the Nigerian Social Structure, thus: “There are no radicals in Nigeria. Only mad men and martyrs” (p. 71).

Garricks equally introduces Joseph Peter, popularly known as Tubo, as one of the characters who will help grant readers more insight into the dirty oil politics in the region. Tubo’s revelations are quite informative on the basis of how the oil companies operate; himself being a staff of the Imperial Oil Company. In his evaluation of Amaibi’s prosecution by the government and their behind-the-scene partner (The Imperial Oil Company), he concludes that “Amaibi was, in many ways more dangerous than the likes of Doughboy. He was respected, informed, articulate, and always had a platform to rage from” (p. 15). Presumably, the author’s major goal would be to compare Doughboy’s militant approach with Amaibi’s activist approach. Amaibi’s burden all through the story is that he is an educated activist who unnerves the government by exposing its complicit relationship or conspiracy with oil the companies against its own people. As a result, he is set up, arrested and accused of the death of Mr. Brian Manning, expatriate with the Imperial Oil Company who was kidnapped by his childhood mate, Doughboy. The government ensures that he goes through a very tortuous time trying to prove his innocence rather than engaging in the sensitization of campaign against the oil companies and their partner – government. He is abused in various ways by the government soldiers and the government politicians who persecute him by labeling him a murderer. He is incarcerated and narrowly escapes with his life from a looming death sentence. His father is brutalized and eventually blinded by the invading soldiers. His wife is raped as his unborn child dies in the process. These premeditated attacks become Amaibi’s burden for attempting to draw the attention of the public to the Niger Delta problem.

Doughboy, prefers and proffers violence as a tool for the emancipation of the regions natives which is in line with Ojaide’s view. Ojaide, a notable Niger Delta writer has in *Delta Blues* and *Home Song* (his poetic anthology) partly accused the oil companies in the region. The following extract from “Delta Blues” exemplifies this notion:

Then shell broke the bond
With quakes and a hell
Of flares. Stocking a hearth
Under God’s very behind, (13)

Ojaide’s argument is that when the oil producing communities in the region initially sent delegates to Abuja to draw government’s attention to the environment damage caused in the drilling process by the companies, they were not granted audience. Rather, their complaints were to “deaf ears” as they were denied presence with the power brokers and chased away

with guns as evident in line 4-5 of “Seasons” in the same anthology. Thus: We selected delegates to take our prayers to Abuja/But guns scared them from the Promised Land (15). Ojaide, in “Sleeping in a Makeshift Grave” and “Elegy for Nine Warriors” recounts the threnodies of pain, and ultimate sacrifice paid by members of activists like Isaac Boro and most especially Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni indigenes who were killed by the Nigerian government. This was the point Ojaide presented by 1998 when *Delta Blues and Home Song* was published by Kraft Books Limited. But by 2007, he had advanced much more radically in ideology and published his newly formed radical disposition in another poetic anthology entitled *The Tale of the Harmattan* by Kwale Books. The single statement in the poem “Egbesu Boys” in which he praises the militants, that they “do the honorable duty of brave sons” (41) exemplifies this radical disposition. Suffice it therefore to state that this shift from peaceful protest to violence has only succeeded in securing the attention of the government but has unfortunately created an almost irrepressible social vice in the region – militancy, multiple cult groups and violence. Doughboy does not only represent this radical disposition but also resonates Machiavelli’s concept violence which, according to Adele Jinadu’s interpretation, “was the only means of arresting decadence under certain circumstances” (1980: p. 90). In Doughboy’s own similar words, violence is the only thing that the government and the oil companies respond to” (239).

Tomorrow Died Yesterday has also revealed the volume of dishonesty that abounds in the region, one of the significant reasons for the creation of Tubo as a character in the novel. He reveals how the oil companies secretly pays ransoms to get out their expatriates from the hands of kidnappers just as the likes of Wali, a security operative working in such cases takes home his own secret share of the ransom. In the end, both Wali and the government enjoy public credit for the successful release of the kidnapped victims. This is revealed in Tubo’s statement: “As usual, all we did was to pay a ransom, secretly of course for their release. And as usual the government somehow got the credit for their safe return” (p. 11). Tubo also exposes the reason behind the arrogance and indifference of the oil companies which adds to the under-development of the region. The fact is that the expatriates, as represented by Manning, get protection from the government which emboldens them coupled with the license and access to the region’s wealth. In Tubo’s words,

Manning was anything but poor. He was arrogant, obnoxious bully, and a little more than a racist thug. No one, not even the white men, liked him. Though nobody said it, we all probably thought that if anyone deserved to be kidnapped, it was Manning (p. 17)

As it is exemplified in the novel, the crisis in the Niger Delta begins with the Nigerian government contracting the Imperial Oil Company to explore oil in the region without considering the wellbeing of the people and their environment. In response, some youths in the region professing political and economic marginalization, decide to group themselves into militants, standing starkly at odds against the Nigerian government and the Oil Companies. Ironically, the questionable means through which they have resolved to address this crisis has made them popular in some quarters and unpopular in others. There are also other actors in the scene. There are the clandestine and subversive activities of the so-called statesmen or chiefs of the region who conveniently hobnob with all other stakeholders for personal reasons. The acquisitive and predatory inclinations of these actors have made members of the Nigerian public to become suspicious of the emancipator posture and real interest of each of the stake holders. The example of the council of chiefs of the Asiamia

community in the novel explains part of the leadership equation and stakeholders' identity in the region. Their predatory role illustrates their concealed desire for monetary reward in preference to any other suggestion concerning the compensation of oil spillage that claims the life of Soboye. For such chiefs, Catechist Akassa's suggestion is simply unpopular because it will "not give them any direct monetary benefit" (p. 130). Unfortunately, the chiefs and the Amanayabo who are expected to act as statesmen for their people are inextricably infused in the conspiracy and treachery against them. Such is the disenchantment that perhaps triggers the authors construction of the novel's title through Doughboy's comment: "There is no future for the children of the Niger Delta. Their tomorrow is already dead. It died yesterday" (p. 237).

Such conspiratorial roles by these statesmen have attracted the criticism of critics like Victor Jike stating that, "the typical Niger-Delta youth sees the elder as the epitome of the colossal failure in the bid to harness the resources of the area" (2004: p. 696). As a result, this disillusionment potentiates the simultaneous rise of militancy in the region. Such inter-generational disenchantment equally exposes how the so-called statesmen have established strong capitalist ties with the multinational oil companies. It provides them permission and protection in paying low compensatory amounts for their environmental degradation whilst receiving contracts and large sums of money under the façade of contractors. This is the fictive construction Garricks makes in the passage where the Amanayabo and his council of chiefs sell the Ofrima Island for their own gains. It is such example of betrayal that is reflective of the complicity of the heavily beaded local chiefs and their Amanayabo.

Earlier in the novel, the author tries to explore the mythic notion of immorality wrapped around the personality of militants who actually in real sense were themselves earlier victimized and later forced into edginess. Doughboy's mythic invincibility is built around public impression of a charade of bullet-defying charms which for him is "a very effective way of sowing terror in the hearts of men" (p. 5). Added to that is the advantage of being familiar with the geographical contours such as the intersectional or crisscrossing rivers of the region, coupled with those well-known creeks and rivulets that empty themselves into the sea. Doughboy has mastered the mappings of this environment and thus boasts: "I returned over the years to meditate, to hide things, to hide myself. Now I saw *Juju* Island as my own, my private haven" (p. 31). Garricks' ultimate goal with the creation of such character as Doughboy is to explore the psyche and sensibilities of militants generally in the Niger Delta and their modus operandi with the multinational oil companies.

Sutcliffe (2013) explains that "the federal government has increasingly controlled the country's oil wealth, with derivations to the entire Niger Delta region dropping from 50% in 1966 and to 3% in the 1990s but recovered only to 13% by 1999," (p. 2). He decries how "the 1969 Petroleum Act and the 1979 Land Use Act declared all oil deposits and land as national assets, expunging any idea of local ownership or control. Unfortunately, the mismanagement and abuse of this policy have caused the enrichment of a few through corruption" (p. 2). This is the point Soboye in the novel reveals before the bunkering fire outbreak that led to his untimely death. Thus, knowing the risky implication of his revealatio, Soboye prefers to inform his brother in a whisper, thus: "A few powerful people in the country. I'm not sure who they are but the rumor is that they include Generals in the army, and some, mainly Hausa civilians in government and business. Afonya and others merely work for them" (p. 112). This passage is suggestive of the fact that the indigenes have been turned to mere tools for the mafia group that formed the crop of top government functionaries – especially the out-of-sight or hidden northern politicians. The way it works is the Soboye and his fellow youths, bunker the oil locations and, in the process, cause oil spillage in the area, while the oil companies pay "ten thousand naira to the Asiama fishermen

and people, through the Amanaybo” (p. 118). The Amanayabo then pays “only one hundred naira each to the other fishermen, and kept over seven thousand naira for himself” (p. 119). That is the racket. It is this type of mafia group, Soyinka talked about in Basorun (2013) when he gave his account of those responsible for the cause of Nigerian/Biafran war:

There has to be a distraction, and it has to take place on such a level as to completely obscure all other goals of society. The Northern mafia got together with the Lagos counterparts and contributed the necessary investment for self-preservation. Cold-bloodedly the pogrom was planned, every stage plotted, and the money for operations distributed to the various centres of mayhem. The Ibos, twice victims, were again the most obvious, the most logical victims of this new profit-motivated massacre ... the ‘trouble-making’ southerners no matter from what region were included in the massive sweep. (p. 177).

Some of the political debris or aftermath of the civil war is today believed to have ultimately led to the repressive attitude against the delta region, such as is the case of the killing of Saro wiwa. Ezeani (2013) explains:

Some prominent people from Eastern minorities, such as Ken Saro-Wiwa, were amongst the most anti Biafra. Ironically, Ken Saro-Wiwa was later executed by the Nigerian state he fought for, because he, like Emeka Ojukwu, championed the just cause of the Ogoni people whose habitation was being decimated by Shell Oil Company. (p. 83)

The novel’s narrative which is partly woven around the tragic history of Doughboy’s family is meant to equally draw sympathy for him, almost justifying his cause as a militant. Doughboy’s militant history can be adjudged to squarely be a mismanaged case of Nigerian government. his childhood history presents a prospective career which was foiled by the system at some point. The government fails to provide him educational sponsorship. The government is indirectly responsible for his elder brother’s death. The government is responsible for his father’s murder. The government took away his legitimate means of livelihood, and in his confused and frustrated state of mind, forced him to create one for himself. Such dilemma is resonated in Stanley Igwe’s assessment:

One level of corruption begets another of its kind in a network of unending ripple effects or multiplier reactions, inducing amidst other social and economic ills, poverty, economic stagnation ... each of these resulting multiplier effects carries with it other multiplier effects ... poverty result from unemployment ... unemployment results in an enormity of vices including: petty robbery, armed robbery, kidnapping, internet scams, rape, unethical and immoral activities, etc. (2010: p. 91-92)

Evidence of government’s irresponsibility has apparently led to the ruin of the region. For instance, Mpaka’s sources of livelihood (rivers and farmlands) are eventually polluted. As one situation leads to another, this condition forces him to become a habitual drunkard, it

deranges his mental state of mind and finally cuts short his life through the shattering bullets of the cold-blooded Nigerian soldiers; the likes of Rodman and Gorimapa. Ironically, the revolutionary inclination of his son's militancy attempts to decapitate the social fabrics of the same society from another direction, instead of healing it. Ultimately, the region is severely militarized. It becomes a case of two wrongs that are unable to make a right.

The author's juxtaposition of Doughboy's family experience with that of Amaibi's, and how each responds to similar circumstances, is to expose the consequences of the choices available for the people or natives of the community. Amaibi is framed by the administration while his wife is raped by government soldiers. This brutality consequently results to the death of his child and traumatizes him. His incarceration leads to his amputation. However, at the end of these layers of ordeals, he makes the rare choice to forgive those that are responsible for his predicament; Wali, Doughboy and the Nigerian soldiers. He pledges to adopt a better means of resistance in place of outright violence. A similar fate befalls his father, Catechist Akassa, who prefers being a committed teacher than becoming an Amanayabo (king). Like his son, he is abused and brutalized by the invading soldiers who, among other inhuman treatments, render him permanently blind. But in spite of his predicaments, he advises Doughboy to embrace peace as a better alternative to violence.

It is not in contest that the activities in the novel are deeply and precisely rooted in the oil politics of the Imperial oil company on its gas flaring which has incapacitated the social and economic life of the indigenes. This has caused productivity losses, occupation displacement and disorientation which leads to poverty. Ibaba Ibaba, citing Salau (1993) and Adeyemo (2002) respectively, acknowledges the fact that "crops planted about 200 metres from flare sites, lose 100 percent of their yield. Those planted about 600 metres from flare sites, experience 45 percent loss in yield, and 10 percent loss in yield for crops planted one kilometer away from gas flares" (2016: p. 16). This scenario is equally reflected in the novel as Garricks metaphorically equates the flare with the biblical hell which is conveyed through Tubo's childish ignorance:

"Of course it's hellfire, Amaibi" Tubo cried.

Then he threw a challenge,

"Has any of you seen that fire stop burning, even for one minute?

Tell me, have you?" (p. 96).

The above passage is meant to help readers vividly the magnitude of the people's pain as they suffer from climate change, deforestation, decreases the loss of aquatic life. In line with Paul Collier's proposed "feasibility hypothesis," the economic explanation for the crises in the region, stipulates that the presence of material resources is bound to provoke rebellion just as the motivations behind violent rebellion "are incidental to the explanation of civil war" (Qtd., in Joe Sutcliffe, p. 1). For him, it is economic greed and the wish to gain access to resources wealth that create and drives rebellion in this case. In other words, the overwhelming wealth underneath the region has provided a fertile ground for treachery, gluttony, conspiracy, betrayal, thuggery, grievance, revenge, violence, underdevelopment and death. This is in part Collier's perspective which refers to youth militants in the region as mass criminal group offering only an ideological façade of political grievances and concern for their communities (Qtd., in Joe Sutcliffe, p. 1).

Indeed, the resources in the region have equally attracted the interest of Nigerians of other ethnic extractions whom the militants perceive as threats and invaders of the region too. Such pictures help to explain one basic fact about Nigerian federal system – a competitive one. An example of this competitive drama plays out at the scene where Doughboy confronts the bodyguards of Biran Manning before Manning's abduction:

"... Where are you from?" I asked.

“Nigeria, sir ...” I shook my head. He knew that wasn’t what I wanted to hear
“Sorry sir, Kano State, sir.” He knew he couldn’t lie. His accent indicated he was from the North
“Hausa man.” I lowered my voice. I didn’t want my anger to show. I continued slowly.
“How can you, a Hausa man, be my brother? When your people were stealing our oil money all these years, was I your brother then?”
... I turned to another one who was face down on the floor. He was in the navy uniform. I kicked him hard on his ribs.
“Hey, you! Where are you from?”
“Eh...eh...Ekiti state, sir.”
“...Yoruba man, are you my brother?”
“... My people have the oil, yet it is your people that have all the job in the oil companies. Your people refuse to employ my people. They say we are not qualified. Yoruba man, answer me – are my people not qualified?” (pp. 6-7)

The same ethnicity phenomenon in the above excerpt is in line with one of the reasons presented by Gideon Orkar for the April 22, 1990 coup against the federal military government of Nigeria at the time. According to Siollun (2013), “in what was a precursor complaint to the current Niger Delta resource control struggle, Orkar complained that ... ‘the people from these parts of the country have been completely deprived from benefiting from the resources given them by God’ “(pp. 148-149). It is such deprivation that leads to what Roche (2006) calls ‘silent wars’ (p. 18). The socio-political/economic history of the region has shown that prior to the advent of the oil companies, the region was known to enjoy complete natural ecosystem, a natural disposition portrayed in Doughboy’s earlier description:

The Island was named by the Asiamas people of long ago ...
I was fourteen when I came to the island for the first time. I came all on my own with my father’s canoe. The mangrove tree looked thicker, foreboding. The forest sounded more alive, eerie. The sticky swamp smell was more pungent. But apart from mosquitoes, periwinkles, crabs, alligators, there was nothing else on the island, no spirit, no witch doctors. (p. 31).

In a subsequent passage, Doughboy would later give a contrary account of Asiamas’s fate at the intrusion of the multinational oil companies, as represented by the Imperial Oil Company:

We woke up one morning to see oil, thick and black, floating on top of the brown water of the river. The river became sluggish in its flow, as the oil gradually choked its life away. After school, I sat on the banks and watched dead fish, turned on their sides, slowly drift by. The river stank. Papa called it an oil spill (p. 118).

Indeed, the ecological devastation caused by the oil spills sometimes occur on daily basis so much so that it has forced the youths to abandon their agricultural and fishing livelihoods for militancy. Moreover, the government’s attitude to ignore the plight of the people of the region is noted to have further incensed the people such that most of the commoners tend to support militancy in the region. In other words, their reaction in this form is accounted by the

federal government's isolative policy of abandonment over their social wellbeing. The following is how the author portrays their living condition:

Like most shanty towns, Asiamia Waterside looked like it had been built by a mad child. The houses were confused: facing every direction, and backing every direction at the same time. They were built with anything that gave cover - corrugated iron, wood, cement, mud, plastic sheets and thatch ... There were no streets in Asiamia Waterside: just tiny, filthy, dark labyrinthine alleys. The alleys and the Dockyard creek allowed for the smooth and steady flow of black-market petrol, drugs, sex and guns. The black-market petrol was for everyone, especially during the frequent periods of scarcity. The drugs were basis: cocaine for the rich, Igbo and its many variants for the others. Sex for a month came as cheap as the price of a phone card, and the guns used to be just for the armed robbers: until they discovered oil bunkering and militancy. (pp. 237-238)

Owugah (1999) evaluates the dimensions of the people's agitation in four developmental stages. To paraphrase him, thus, the first he identifies as the earlier signs of agitation (which started in the 1980s), manifesting itself in the form of the people's legal action against the oil companies to pay adequate compensations for damage to their property. The second stage appeared more in the form of peaceful demonstrations and occupation of flow stations to persuade the oil companies pay adequate compensations and fulfill their promises in providing those basic social amenities and jobs for the indigenes of the community. The reactions of the oil companies to invite the military and other security forces against the communities, according to Owugah, resulted in the destruction of lives and property which incensed the indigenous youths and created the third stage – militancy. This stage presents how the militants forcefully occupy and shut down oil-flow stations, kidnap oil workers and seize boats/other vessels belonging to the oil companies. The fourth stage is that in which the people currently demands for resource ownership and control (5-8). This is how Ibaba (2016) explains it:

The demand for resource ownership and control marks the fourth phase of the Niger Delta people's struggle for integration into the oil wealth. In this regard, the Ogoni Bill of Rights (1990), the Kaiama Declaration (1998), the Bill of Rights of the Oron People (1999), the Resolutions of the First Urhobo Economic Summit (1998), the Aklaka Declaration (1999) and the Warri Accord (1999) made resource ownership and control their cardinal objectives ... The Kaiama Declaration of 1998 was more emphatic. It declared that: All land and natural resources (including mineral resources) within the Ijaw territory belong to Ijaw communities and are the basis of our survival. We cease to recognize all undemocratic Decrees that rob our people/communities of the right to ownership and control of our lives. (p. 13).

It is not in doubt that one of the significant values of *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* is its expository dimension to the question of the Niger Delta crises. In the political history of the region, it is important to note that militancy at some point became the only effective medium that provided the youths the ascendancy into the membership of stakeholders after they were repeatedly ignored by politicians at the national level. This point has been earlier enunciated through the discourse on Ojaide's radical viewpoint. In other words, militancy provided the indigenes a listening ear which was initially nonexistent. It happened as a result of the inability of the Nigerian government to manage the crises which ended up accessorizing the excuses for militancy and pursuit of pecuniary gains through the kidnapping of expatriates. This explains the militants' involvement in the enterprising but futile venture of ransoming, arguably an irresponsible act. The brigand and brazen attitude of the state security agents, portrayed through Wali in the novel, and the impunity with which the government officials frame up unsuspecting citizens (such as Amaibi) as militants, so as to justify their mode of reprisals, compels one to question the measure of decency left in the government's security apparatuses.

It is remarkable to see in the novel how soldiers get away with their crimes. Such is the impunity that cost Catechist Akassa his sight: "Two operations couldn't undo the damage ... he had somehow defied the people who had blinded him ... even though they never showed any remorse" (pp. 288 – 289). Such impunity cost the life of Mpaka (Doughboy's father) as Kaniye recounted later: "He did not open his eyes when they shot him. The bullets pierced his body. He jerked a macabre dance as he welcomed them" (p. 369). More so, such impunity costs the lives of all the boat commuters in "Asiama Town: Sunday, 10th August, 1997" (p. 365). Such impunity is well demonstrated by one of the soldiers, Gorimapa, who barks out the following order: "I SAY EAT YOUR SHIT" Gorimapa shouted and raised the rifle' (p. 373). There is also Rodman's impudence:

Rodman ordered, "Madam, oya comot ya cloth ... Comot everything ... Dise took off her bra and panties ... My unborn son slept in the small bulge in her tummy ... By now, Rodman had lowered the rifle from my head ... Rodman slapped Dise's leg open. As he forced himself into her, she cried out in pain ... (pp. 386 – 387)

Amaibi's grief portrayal: "The air was thick with the ... smell of blood. Dise's blood. My unborn son's blood. The youth's blood" (389), symbolically represents the degree of violence in the region fuelled by government soldiers. At a broader political spectrum (Nigeria), what Soyinka in *Basorun* (2013) qualifies as a "fabricated entity" (*Honour for Sale* Xi) is, in turn, bluntly described as Achebe in the following manner:

Nigeria is not a great country. It is one of the most disorderly nations in the world. It is one of the most corrupt, insensitive, inefficient places under the sun. It is one of the most expensive countries and one of those that give least value for money. It is dirty, callous, noisy, ostentatious, dishonest and vulgar. In short, it is among the most unpleasant places on earth. (1983: p. 11)

Both notable Nigerian critics have indirectly accused the leadership caucus of the Nigerian state by these statements. These government officials who in the novel are entrusted with the responsibility to negotiate with militants are bent on exploiting the processes thereafter for their own gains. Despite denials by the government and the multinational oil companies, it is

widespread knowledge that militants receive millions of naira as payoff in exchange for hostages under their custody. More so, some Nigerians are of the view that government also secretly pay ransom for the protection of VIPs, pay militants to prevent the blowing up of oil wells, and equally pay them for the release of expatriates. When the secrecy for such backstage transactions become unmanageable, it is believed that this was what compelled the Nigerian government to openly create an Amnesty programme for the militants.

When foreigners are kidnapped, as portrayed in the novel, government negotiators (security operatives, politicians and the region's statesmen) are alleged of inflating the payoff. The proceeds are shared by these middlemen who have built for themselves a powerful cartel. This is the role of Wali and Chief Dumo Ikaki/Chief Opia – members of the Asiam Council of Chiefs. Thus, the lucrative nature of kidnapping becomes of high value to all and sundry. It is for this reason that Tubo explains: "after looting of public funds by government officials and oil bunkering, kidnapping is the next profitable enterprise in the Niger Delta" (195). He further throws more light on the cartel's modus operandi:

There is a pecking order for the value of hostages. Americans, Britons and Western Europeans rank top, the Grade A. Their ransoms are the most expensive. Next are the Eastern Europeans and some South-Americans. At the bottom of the pile are the Asians and Arabs. Nobody kidnaps the Lebanese though ... They are more Nigerian than we are and probably wouldn't fetch fifty thousand. They are not worth the trouble. (pp. 197 – 198).

The activity of these cartel members from each of these groups has become public knowledge to some Nigerians. These groups include the government negotiators, company representatives, council chiefs and the kidnapers. Doughboy, aware of this corrupt clique, explains:

Everyone else is milking our oil. The government has already sold the oil that will be drilled in the next decades. The politicians and military boys have shared oil blocks among themselves. The companies use outdated but cheaper drilling methods which pollutes the environment. The refineries never work because it's more profitable for some people to import petroleum products. The marketers cause artificial scarcity so they can make a killing. It's a never-ending gang rape. (pp. 235 – 236).

However, Garricks attempts, beyond mere lachrymatory and expository approach (as we have been discussing so far), to render a more jurisprudential prescription to the question of exploitation, corruption and militancy in the region. In other words, he explores dialogue, redress and legal justice as panaceas to impasse in the region. The novel makes a case for how groups or individuals, irrespective of sex, age, ethnicity, religion, and other such factors, can access justice. The novel begins in 2003, at the height of militancy and kidnapping in the Niger Delta. It spans four decades – the 70s, 80s, 90s, and the early 2000s. It is centred on four childhood friends (Amaibi, Doye, Kaniye and Tubo) who struggle to grow and excel in a world that is torn apart by corruption, betrayal, privation, militancy, marginalization, and environmental pollution. The crises of their lives begin with the discovery of crude oil in their community, Asiam.

The author uses Asiana as a microcosm of the Niger Delta region which produces most of Nigeria's wealth. Despite its strategic place in the fictional country, Asiana is plagued with many conflicts between the government and the community, on the one hand, and between the oil companies and the community, on the other hand. The military invasion of Asiana in 1997 marks a watershed on the trajectory of the four major characters. Doye becomes a militant and kidnapper of oil workers. Tubo, a worker with Imperial Oil, decides to exploit the entire situation to his advantage. Amaibi becomes an academic and ecoactivist, and Kaniye delves into the legal profession and restaurant management.

In the novel, there are instances of oil spillage from Imperial Oil's pipeline into Asiana River. The company is reluctant in cleaning up the area and paying compensation to fishermen whose means of livelihood are destroyed. Scholars have shown how oil-producing communities lose huge portions of their mangrove forest (a source of forest products and a natural habitat for fish and other aquatic creatures) as a result of unethical practices in oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta. Moreover, the pollution of the water and land has serious implications for the sustainability of fishing and farming, which are their traditional occupations. For instance, Imperial Oil lays pipelines in the rivers and one morning, the people woke up to "see oil, thick and black, floating on top of the brown water of the river" (p. 83).

The oil companies also have local collaborators who betray the trust of their people just to amass oil wealth for themselves. Many of these collaborators are village chiefs and community relations officers. Chief Ikaki and Tubo are examples of these. The former diverts contracts, scholarships, and other benefits meant for the entire community. He distributes them to his cronies and loyalists. Tubo, like Zilafeya in Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*, is mixed-race. He is one of those children derogatorily called *born-troways* (children rejected by their fathers or whose fathers are nonexistent). The narrator captures how these children come into the world:

The Portuguese ships and sailors soon set sail, but not before planting some tiny memories of their pleasant stay. The people returned to Asiana Town. The mementoes became obvious in nine months and the face wave of mixed race children were seen in Asiana (p. 55)

Tubo is an unscrupulous Imperial Oil worker who garners pecuniary gains through the kidnap of oil workers. He negotiates the release of kidnapped expatriates and gets paid for it.

Against the background of foregoing discussion on environmental pollution, unchecked oil exploration activities, and corruption, Emeseh (2011) observes that the Nigerian state has failed in two ways. First, it has not provided effective access to justice by not enacting laws to effectively regulate oil prospecting and exploration. Second, there is a dearth of efficient frameworks for addressing the grievances of the locals and victims of environmental degradation. Moreover, the regulatory agencies established to protect the people in this regard do not live up to their assigned roles which include seeking justice on behalf of victims of oil pollution. Hence, Garricks uses the courtroom scenes to depict the possibility and viability of individuals and whole communities seeking redress through civil actions in court.

However, some groups and individuals do not subscribe to this ideology of resorting to legal procedures or dialogue. We see this represented through the activities of Soboye and Doughboy, among others. Soboye and twelve others resort to oil bunkering but they are killed in the process: "the fire, bright and brilliant, gave enough light for us to see their deep-roasted corpses which littered the shore" (p. 85). Bøås (2011) notes that "local communities

that receive low benefits from oil production – and struggle under the weight of poverty, underemployment, environmental problems, crime and corruption – have fueled a militant uprising” (p. 118). This has led to the growth of militias, some described as armed factions with political agendas, while others are described as social bandits who exploit the confusing atmosphere to garner pecuniary gains. Overall, these groups exist because of their grievances against the exploitation of the Niger Delta oil resources.

According to Ikelegbe (2011), apart from the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Martyrs Brigade, the Coalition for Militant Action in the Niger Delta (COMA), the Iduwini Volunteer Force (IVF) and the Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC), which are the main groups involved in the ongoing insurgency, some other militant movements that have emerged in the Niger Delta includes the Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality (MOSIEND), the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC) and the Niger Delta Resistance Movement (NDRM). Others are Egbema Youth Movement, Membutu Boys, Itsekiri Youth Movement, Bush Boys, the Niger Delta Vigilante Service (NDVS) and the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF). Furthermore, the smaller armed groups include the Ijaw Freedom Fighters, the Niger Delta Freedom Fighters, the Atangbata Youths, Tombolo Boys and the Adaka Marine.

But this strategy, as adopted by Soboye and Doughboy, fails in the end. This is vocal about Garricks’ social vision of foregrounding legal justice and dialogue as panaceas for the Niger Delta impasse. However, concerning the achievement of social justice, after being severely flogged by soldiers, Doye muses and questions Kaniye:

One soldier? What is the value of an Asiamia life? How many of our people will have to die today to have to pay for the life of one soldier? I counted seven corpses on the street as I was being dragged here. I know many more have been slaughtered. So, lawyer, what are our chances of getting justice for all that has happened today? (p. 225)

Francis, LaPin, and Rossiasco (2011) remarks that the government’s responses to the rise of militant and violent movements in the Niger Delta often tilt towards the use of the military to squash such groups. According to Ukeje (2011),

The Nigerian state’s militarized response to community agitation is evident from the heavy presence of soldiers, naval officers and ratings, mobile policemen and a plethora of security agents deployed in and around the vicinity of oil installations to safeguard personnel and facilities. Since the 1990s, heavy military deployment and presence has become one of the state’s main responses to rising community protests and resistance against oil multinationals, making the Niger Delta the most militarized region in Nigeria. State repression of protests is evident from military campaigns against places such as Umuechem and Ogoni, Odi, Gbaramatu, in Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States. (p. 83)

However, Courson (2009) and Ukeje (2011) have submitted that the militarization strategy has been unsuccessful in addressing the crises in the region. In the novel, the military invasion of Asiamia takes place in 1997, after a soldier dies during the unrest at Asiamia Base Camp. The sporadic gunshots, physical assault and sexual assault on the people of Asiamia

leave the community in a state of trauma. Some young men are severely brutalized, others are coerced to do some inhuman acts such as eating their excreta, while others are gunned to death.

Many scholars of the Niger Delta literary tradition are unanimous that women suffer hugely in the oil-crisis. The predicaments of women in the Niger Delta are in two ways. Oluwaniyi (2011) states that women struggle doubly against organized state oppression and other forms of oppressive gender relations in a social system that is patriarchal. According to the critic, this is partly expressed in the collaboration between the local male elites, the state, and oil companies, all of which conspire to exclude women from the distribution of the benefits of the oil industry, resulting in their impoverishment and disempowerment. In Oluwaniyi's (2011) view, "women are the most affected in this economy of oil because, in the cultural division of labour, Niger Delta women are mostly farmers and provide for family subsistence" (p. 153).

The foregoing is exemplified in *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*. The author foregrounds the experiences of Dise as representative of other female characters that are raped and denigrated by military officers. Dise is raped by soldiers in the presence of her husband, Amaibi. Moreover, a soldier forces his rifle into her vagina. The effect of this horrible experience leads to the crumbling of Dise and Amaibi's matrimonial home. Further, Amaibi loses his sexual virility and finds it difficult to relate to his wife until many years later after he eventually recovers from his trauma. The defilement of Dise can also be read as a metaphoric representation of the exploitation and despoliation of the Niger Delta.

However, Garricks suggests through the successful battles fought by Amaibi, Kaniye, Dise, Sir James, Tubo and Catechist Akassa in the novel, that the people's engagement with government in dialogue and diplomacy is a better option to militancy. This is recapitulated in Amaibi's statement after his legal victory:

After, I'm discharged from a hospital ... my fight will continue to be non-violent ... We've kidnapped and hounded expatriates so much that they're beginning to flee the Niger Delta. We kidnap the ones who drill our oil. We also kidnap the ones who build our roads, and treat our children when they are sick. Then, we complain about lack of roads or healthcare. The stupidity of our own brothers for ransom. What next? ... Our people must drop their arms and get off the streets and creeks. The war will not be won there. The war will be won in corporate boardrooms if we convince Big Oil that in the long run, it will be more profitable for them to drill ethically. The war will be won in legislative chambers, if we persuade our law makers to change the laws that deny us our resources. It will be won in polling stations and courts of law, as we remove the thieves who masquerade as our leaders, from power. We will never win with our guns or aggression. We will win with our intellect, ideas, by serious negotiations and informed debate (pp. 412/413)

From the above passage, Garricks makes the point that Doughboy's proposal that violence is the only thing that government and oil companies respond to" (p. 239), should assume an inferior position to Amaibi's more purposeful strategy conveyed in his single statement: "This war is bigger than any one man" (p. 414). The whole story is wrapped up in the motion

that violence only begets violence and cannot create the desired political expectation of the people. As David Francis explains, conflict “is an intrinsic and inevitable part of human existence” (p. 20). However, man’s greatest challenge will always be on how conflicts are resolved.

The Niger Delta contemporary reality which is actually nastier than the picture in *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* proves that the militant-approach to these crises may continue to remain futile and impotent. Oxygenated by the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), militants have only succeeded in commoditizing violence through different ways such as kidnapping, sabotaging and assassination. Nonetheless, the novel helps to reveal the juxtaposition of the two paradoxical ideologies opened to the people of the region. Through the novel, Garricks has confronted the question of militancy and violence through Catechist Akassa when he subtly advises Doughboy: “My son, many say you fight for justice. They say you do what you do because you want good things to come to our people. If what they say is true, then you need to learn. You cannot bring good, by doing bad” (p. 290). Doughboy’s death later conveys the message of futility in his approach. Traces of this futility can be found in his way of life which is filled with betrayal, immorality, murder, flamboyance, suspicion and miscalculation. The high nature of suspicion that abounds in his chosen path of survival is what leads him to miscalculate and murder Somina Whyte.

Militancy as exemplified by Doughboy’s group involves criminality, disregard for existing constitutions and death. It implicatively harbors high negatives of connected crimes and incredible death tolls as a result of combative impasse between the indigenous militants and the Nigerian security operatives. In order to sustain its financial oxygen, it has exploited many shapes of criminalized activities. Its trademarks includes the grounding of economic and social activities through kidnapping of oil workers and wealthy Nigerians, rape, arson, sabotage, assassination of high profile individuals, forceful adoption of members of the public for ritual purposes as to enhance the charms of militants, piracy at the sea borders, bank robbery and destruction of social structures.

One may attribute some of the elements of political violence in the region to be antecedents of the militants. Some of the region’s militants have bulldozed their way into state and national political corridors of power and have become immensely wealthy as a result of their multi-dimensional resources. There are instances where militants have been funded by some politicians as thugs. They have also been self-funded through other personal nefarious activities. The amnesty program which is designed to placate them by the Nigerian government has equally empowered them economically. The desperation of the government to sustain the same old system has resulted to the creation of a separate annual budget in order to “tame” each beneficiary. Ironically, in a field research carried out by Moses Ikoh and Ebebe Ukpong on the Presidential Amnesty Programme, the result further exposes the futility in the Nigerian government’s effort. The duo actually administered questionnaire on 293 ex-militants in order to elicit information on their socio-demographic background, evaluation of the amnesty program, as well as the push and pull factors to militancy. The result from the participatory respondents was shocking. In the words of Ikoh and Ukpong, “the amnesty will not result in the overall development of the NDR (Niger Delta Region)” (p. 1).

All the Niger Delta minority groups are aggrieved because of their political and economic marginalization from the gains of the oil production that takes place on their region. Moreover, they are pained by the commodification and destruction of the environment and sources of livelihood through unethical oil prospecting and exploration. Most importantly, their lack of access to justice, redress and compensation compound their grievances. It is against this background that Garricks explores the law and dialogue as instruments of social

order and transformative justice and their place in resolving the Niger Delta oil crises. By presenting his subject-matter through a legal context, Garricks' social vision is unambiguous: to foreground the power of dialogue and the law to arrest the rising tide of tensions and conflicts in the region. Emeseh (2011) opines thus:

the need for reviewing the normative content of various laws and legal instruments, starting with the Nigerian federal constitution and laws applying to the Nigerian oil industry, as well as other procedural and institutional gaps and lapses that hinder the effectiveness of the system of justice administration. It is recognized that simply reviewing laws without addressing the prevailing socio-economic and political environment within which they operate cannot effectively resolve the conflict in the Niger Delta (p. 55).

The basic tenet of the rule of law, which is equality of all before the law, cannot be achieved without access to justice. This practice underpins the modern democratic government. Hence, towards the end of the story, Sir. J. F. K. Rufus decides to defend Amaibi. Amaibi is discharged and acquitted of the accusation of aiding and abetting the kidnap and the death of an expatriate oil worker. At this point, he re-evaluates his belief in and support for violence as a panacea for the environmental decay and marginalization of the Niger Delta.

But we must ask ourselves: what has this achieved for us as a people? We've kidnapped and hounded expatriates so much that they're beginning to flee the Niger Delta ... The stupidity of our violence is frightening ... We need to change the way we do things. We need to stop fighting the wrong battles. Our people must drop their arms and get off the streets and creeks. The war will not be won there. The war will be won in lecture halls as we expand the minds of our young people. (p. 281)

He also advocates that the ecological war will be won in boardrooms, where bright minds can convince oil multinationals about the need for ethical explorations; legislative chambers, where lawmakers will formulate viable policies for oil prospecting and production; polling stations, where the right and progressive leaders will be elected; and courtrooms where litigations against those that defy good governance and policies will be prosecuted. Garricks' novel centres on the efficacy of dialogue among the oil-producing communities, the federal government and the oil multinationals in the attainment of a secure and stable economy in the Niger Delta. Having depicted how both the human and natural resources of the Niger Delta have been wasted through unscrupulous means of carrying out oil business, corrupt political and community leaders and the unprofessionalism of the military, he proffers dialogue and legal justice as options that will bring an end to the malaise.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, highlights of the points made so far from Garricks' fictional representation of the Niger Delta crises in *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*, can be concluded with the statement that the severe assault by the ecologically unfriendly multinational oil corporations coupled with the ill-conceived constitutional laws enforced by the Nigerian Federal Government chiefly

aimed at expropriating the rights of the indigenes, are contributory forces that have negated the development of the Niger Delta. The privatization of the Nigerian state in pursuance of individual, ethnic and sectional interests, has not only defeated the common goal of the generality of the entire Nigerians, but has also resulted to the present political confusion where those in power cannot make any significant administrative progress. In other words, the incapacity of the Nigerian governments to choose a sincere pursuance of the public good has undermined its ability to deal with the militancy phenomenon and its attendant evil. The novel has therefore finally revealed that what presently happens in the region is that those who are paid to take custody of the pipelines (militants) still secretly vandalize them. Those who should secure these pipelines (security agents) aid and abet the same pipeline criminals. Those who should cry out (the masses) will prefer to buy the illegal products with hushed voices at reduced prices. This drama eventually reveals a blurred line between the following groups in the region: security operatives, oil company expatriates, government functionaries, high/low members of the various communities in the region and, the militant groups. In the first place, the situation simply exists because the Nigerian governments have laid out the foundation of very high acquisitive propensity, turning the region into a rat-race political space.

The lack of employment opportunities and social mobility has left many of the youths in the region economically sterile and they have become envious of the likes of Doughboy. In other words, Doughboy's legacy for the Niger Delta region becomes the economic predation for self-enrichments. This means that the commercialization of militancy in the region may perceptively become a systematically decriminalized venture before the masses that see nothing wrong with it. Being complicit in Doughboy's crimes, the masses in the novel see Doughboy as their hero while aspiring to be like him. Massive oil spillages have destroyed what used to be lucrative forests for hunters who are now haunted by the devastated reality on ground. Fishermen have no need to set sail for the day's job since their river banks have become littered with bloated and decaying sea-food. Farmers are daily frustrated with the state of their farmlands which are covered with black crude, causing the sprouting of frail and grotesque crops. As youths in their confusion choose militancy, more layers to the political complexity emerge – militant and cult rivalry. Such rivalry occurs due to the contestable supremacy amongst the plethora of smaller groups of militants, confraternities or cult gangs in universities, all of which draw their strength from the big time militants. These groups (big or small) are consistently characterized with destruction of life and property, be they the Cult-Group militants, Ethnic/Communal-Group militants or the Political-Party/Resource-Control militants.

The failure of both the federal government and the multinational oil companies in tracing the instability in the area to the exacerbated historic inequalities already in existence even at a larger political scale in the Nigeria state has enormously contributed to the crises in the region. Their inability to render a sincere and properly conceptualized nature of the problem, but have chosen to adopt an imperialistic attitude to the problem, further makes the case more virulent. The Nigerian government's incapacity to meet up with the aspiration of the people in simple matters as providing employment and development in the region has apparently created for the youths the identify of economic predators.

On terms of solution, the Niger Delta youths yawn for gainful employment, job security and infrastructural development. How to implement and achieve these basic needs for the people of the region becomes the greatest task for each succeeding Nigerian government. One may observe that each of the novel's militant is either not given educational or employment opportunities. Doughboy's fate is twisted by the recklessness of the government that systematically exterminates his family. This picture contradicts that of Kaniye, Amaibi and

Tubo who did not end up as militants. The simple reason is that they have been provided with education and job opportunities. They are not likely to take up arms as an option, unless forced. The commitment of a Nigerian government to govern by example without selfish motives will stand as instructive testimonies. This is the lesson one learns from the advanced system of governments in the western political space as recapitulated by Ian Morris: “why the West rules is really a question about what I will call social development. By this I basically mean societies’ abilities to get things done – to shape their physical, economic, social and intellectual environments to their own ends” (p. 24).

The Nigerian government must embark on a massive, transparent and directly/strictly monitored infrastructural development. There has to be need for constitutional reforms as to a more focused and transparent interest in the economic empowerment of the people of the region as well as other geopolitical regions. These constitutional reforms will include review of the Memorandum of Understanding with oil companies, all of which will dissipate the revolutionary average presented by the youths for their militancy. In other words, the Nigeria state which is responsible for this problem through the neglect of development and promotion of political rascality in the electoral process becomes the main political game changer which can only reverse the downward trend through a willful and sincere determination to address the aspirations of the generality of the entire citizenry. For this to happen, there has to be a deeply investigative and thoroughly monitored roles assigned to all the stakeholders – the oil companies, the council of chiefs or statesmen, the youths, the contractors, the government security agencies and other forms of middlemen. This course is expected to yield the result of averting the recurring or Hydra-headed militant groups.

Amnesty as an antidote only allows the political space for illegality to be discussed as legality thereby raising questions as to what then becomes legal. Ruthless and demeaned crooks are likely to hijack and exploit this vulnerability which is gradually creeping into Nigeria’s constitution. In fact, in modern day Nigeria, politicians are beginning to abuse this syndrome. The death of Doughboy signifies futility in violence as the rightful antidote to the problem of the Niger Delta region. Therefore, the author’s ultimate message in the novel is that violence begets violence. He also exemplified futility in Doughboy’s way of life and chosen “profession” which has gained momentum among the youths in the region. His death signifies a looming destruction of the Niger Delta region if the system continues in its violent pathway.

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