IN THE FORM OF CREEPING STEM: AN ECO-CULTURAL READING
OF GLORIA ERNEST-SAMUEL’S THE BEAUTIFUL MASQUERADE

By

UCHE KEN CHUKWU PhD
DIRECTORATE OF GENERAL STUDIES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY OWERRI, IMO STATE, NIGERIA
chukwukeneth@yahoo.com

and

CHIOMA CHINEDU-OKO
DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES
FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC NEKEDE, OWERRI, IMO STATE NIGERIA

Abstract
Different disciplines capture the dialectics of human relationship in different manners of explication. From the ambience of history, stories abound of conquest and imperial dominations. Across centuries, there have been cases of powerful nations, tribes or clans rising against, and dominating the weaker ones. In religious studies also, there are stories of inquisition and conquest, where powerful proponents of one religion or the other rise, conquer and impose their religion on other people. More currently, political scientists and political economists have come up with different forms of theories, some of which explain how rulers of societies, who are vested with political power, arrogantly use such to dominate and oppress the ruled. Literature as a mirror of the society, often, if not always, embeds this form of human existence in its artistic recollection of life. This paper examines this dialectical impulse in man from the perspective of an eco-cultural reading of the play The Beautiful Masquerade. Eco-cultural study is an interdisciplinary enterprise involving ecology and culture. Its major motive is to draw a corollary between threat, domination and devastation which ecology suffers from human activities, with what the weaker cultures suffer in the hands of the stronger ones. By implication, the threat of death and extinction which the weaker cultures face from the more powerful ones is analogous with what the poor masses face in the hands of the powerful rulers. This paper examines how this phenomenon is implicated in the language choices of the characters in the play selected for study in this paper. The conclusion of the paper is, therefore, that this threat and consequent domination do not come as a sudden bang. They crawl like the creeping stem, and later gain the dangerous position of a thorn in the flesh of the endangered system.

Keywords: culture, ecology, eco-cultural, creeping stem
Introduction

Literature is notable for its recollection of human experiences. Against this background, it is read at different levels of interpretation. From the overt, its subject matter is examined as a beautiful rendition of well structured lines and stanzas (poetry); or a well articulated narrative capable of stimulating the impulse of the reader (prose); or a beautiful performance of actions and events in a manner that exceedingly suspends disbelief (drama). But beyond being art smithed with words, literature could be read allegorically by interrogating its social relevance. From this viewpoint, characters and events are made to attract deeper interpretations, such as being metaphorical or symbolic representations of human beings and societies respectively.

No matter how fictional a literary work may seem, critics, especially from the sociological view point, would draw a connection between its characters, events and locale to the real world of the writer. In this manner, the poet, novelist, or playwright is not only a creator of beauty but also a social commentator and value assessor. Although this aspect of literary discussion has raised strong contentions about what literature is and should do, there is no denying the fact that every writer draws his/her impulse from events in his/her society. Therefore, it may seem unjust to completely alienate the reading of a literary work from the society that gave it form.

From the foregoing, the essence of this paper is to locate the play The Beautiful Masquerade within eco-cultural discourse; by examining the characters and their actions, as well as the conflicts, within the ambience of eco-cultural conflict between European civilization and African cultural endangerment. The major thrust is to evaluate how the choice of the language of the characters suggests that endangerment crawls in gradually like the creeping stem, culminating in pollution, devastation and erosion of the fabrics of an entire system.

Contextualization of Terms

Culture

Culture as a concept is viewed from different perspectives depending on the disciplinary inclination of the person involved. However, from the various definitions given for the concept, it is deductible that there is no society without culture. Culture involves the sum total of a people’s way of life which includes their perception about morality, their overall disposition to issues, and their spirit. According to Goodenough in Wardhaugh (2006), the culture of a society is “whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves.” From this definition, it is obvious that culture permeates all aspects of human existence. It is what identifies one to be a member of any society, thus abiding by its dictates makes one fit into the social setting. Again, culture is part of what identifies and distinguishes a society. Obasanjo, cited in Aghamelu and Asomugha (2009) contends that “culture gives order and meaning to the social, political, economic, aesthetic and...
religious norms and values of a people, distinguishing them from other people.” It is important to note here that culture is not limited to the non-tangible or non-material such as value, perception, moral code, but extends to the tangible or material such as literature, music, sculpture, dress pattern, art and so on. The process of learning or imbibing culture does not come mechanically; it takes place through a gradual process. Again, culture is not genetically transferred, but it is imbibed through natural growth and maturation in a society, socialization, or sometimes through deliberate instructions and orientation from the elders. In most cases, especially in absorption through growth, maturation, and socialization, the process usually goes unnoticed. This forms the thrust of our paper. There is the possibility of one culture displacing an already existing one, such as in “civilization” and religious indoctrination. Such displacement process is usually gradual, eroding the existing one and replacing it with another that holds stronger and more alluring potentials.

Many factors are responsible for culture erosion and displacement, but currently, the most threatening is globalization, with its instruments such as technology, communication in the form of cable network, social media, internet and so on. Again, academic theories and education curricular have also played considerable role in the trend. Some have advanced the argument that globalization has helped in reducing the globe to a village, but without a critical stock-taking of the extent of destruction and erosion it has inflicted on the ideas, value system, perception mode and life style of the developing nations. It is against the background of the destructive effects of culture contact either through globalization or any other agent, that this paper examines the process in the image of a creeping stem, using the play The Beautiful Masquerade as the text for analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this paper is eco-cultural theory, a multidisciplinary theory adopted to account for the synergy between culture and the ecology. Its focus is on human-nonhuman, human-environment, and human-human relations. Among the many objectives of the theory, according to Ivakhiv (1997), is to “critically assess the cultural representation of the relations within and between human societies (including their gender, race, and class differences), relations between humans and extra-human world, and interactions between these two sets of relations.” He further argues that the theory is premised on the fact that ecological crisis is intertwined with crisis of politics, of values and worldview. Thus, “ecological crisis is not merely a scientific fact but it is more importantly, a cultural fact: it is conceived, imagined, discussed, and acted upon through the diverse cultural expressions of humanity. It is made sense of culturally and our responses to the crisis are enabled as well as constrained by our imagination and interpretation of the crisis.”

By applying the eco-cultural theory in this paper, the aim is to examine how the ideas
of the characters enable or constrain their actions, and how the actions interact and intersect with human social relations. It is to investigate how human ideas in the play impact on the socio-ecological order, affecting human-nonhuman, as well as human-human relations.

The method adopted in the analysis is the linguistic analysis of the language choices of the characters and how such choices implicate the creeping stem process of cultural pollution and erosion. The paper subscribes to Ivakhiv’s view that all the different ideas about culture, environment, environmental politics, human and environment relations find expression in language. Similarly, linguists, especially from the purview of eco-critical linguistics, have argued that environmental issues affect the manner of language use. As such, this paper examines how eco-cultural politics which finds expression in the play reflect in the linguistic choices of the characters.

Synopsis/Text analysis

The play is structured along the story of leadership tussle and the associated political intrigues. It is set in Alaike, a fictional community in the Southeastern part of Nigeria. The story opens with a reception ceremony organized for one of their grandsons, Amauche, who assisted the people to gain autonomy from another community, Amato. Basking in the euphoria of the liberation, the people of Alaike, through the speech of one of the elders, Ichie Onugha, offered to reward Amauche with the leadership throne of the new community. The Chief Priest, as the chief custodian of the culture and tradition of the community, however, faulted this hasty decision. He drew the attention of the community to the established order of heredity which had guided leadership succession in the community, and which the decision would violate. This marked the balkanization of the community along interests and ambition.

Amauche, in an attempt to placate the people feigned being uninterested in the leadership stool. In his speech, he recognized that the stool was for the Ikoku family. However, he came with an alluring proposal that as a graduate of political science, he would wish that anyone who would rule the community ought to be educated. Therefore, he offered to send the son of Ikoku, the rightful heir to the throne, overseas to acquire formal education that would enable him rule the community according to the tenets of modern-day leadership practices. Meanwhile, while Ikoku’s son is away for this study, he, Amauche, would hold brief, and use the opportunity to re-organize the community. This was received with great encomium on him. Hoodwink by Amauche’s supposed philanthropy and selfless service, the community played into his antics. Amauche’s reign of terror formed the major conflicts of the play. He succeeded in dividing the community along interest lines. Those in his support came out with several strategies to crown him the substantive leader in violation of his promise of holding brief for the Ikoku’s. Those that opposed the move were terrorized. Many were assassinated; people’s wives and betrothed maids were
coveted; the community funds were embezzled by Amauche and his cronies; people were constantly threatened and harassed for holding opposing views; the peace of the community was shaken to the foundation. The Chief Priest who led the voice of opposition was severely molested and his revered office desecrated. The climax was an attempt to impose a strange religion on the people; demolish the shrine and replace it with a church, and abolish every existing tradition and norms of the community.

Having been pushed too far for retaliation, the Chief Priest implored the intervention of the gods of the community. The result was the tragic end of Amauche’s reign. The atrocities of his group were exposed. His wife, whom he coveted from one of his victims, slumped and died on hearing the ear throbbing stories of his husband’s evil deeds. Okute, Amauche’s closest ally, discovered that his wife died on trying to abort Amauche’s pregnancy. Revelation upon revelation threw the community into frenzy atmosphere, and the solution was that the culprits must pay the supreme price, and the community must pass through ritual cleansing.

From the synopsis given so far, it is evident that the play anchors on human ideas, interests and ambition, and their impact on the socio-ecological harmony of the Alaike community. Thus, the analysis in the paper focuses on the conflicts as they reflect in their significances on the ecological cohesion of the community.

Analysis
This analysis begins by examining the naming of the characters and their socio-cultural imports. As identified earlier, the play is set in a community in the Southeastern part of Nigeria where Igbo is the dominant language hence the names of the characters are Igbo. In cultural studies, naming is a significant semiotic process both for human beings and place naming.

Names of places often reflect circumstantial conditions which are culturally significant, such as history of migration, war, heroic immortalization, divine visitation, communal or supernatural accord, geographical direction etc. In naming human beings also, there are considerations such as circumstances surrounding birth, wishful configuration and expectation, order of birth, day of birth, heroic incarnation etc. With particular reference to the Igbo, just as in most other African societies, names are more than just tags or convenient emblems of identity, rather they are used to express different messages revolving around the emotional and the circumstantial. In essence, naming cannot be wished away on the alter of the popular but seemingly casual saying that “there is nothing in a name”

In the play under study, the names of the characters can be studied in relation with their instincts and roles. A simple translation of some of the names into English language could assist in this regard.
Amauche—no one knows what is in the mind

Okute—stone

Emenike—take things easy

Akwaeke—egg of piton (something highly cherished)

Izudike—discussion of men of valor

Odogwu—expression used for a man of substance

If we take the characters with these names vis-à-vis their roles in the play, we would discover a close connection. Amauche, true to his name, is initially characterised with alluring disposition and philanthropy that hid his real person, instinct and trait. However, his later actions show that it is difficult to decipher the mind’s construction from the face. Okute on his part is the rock upon which Amauche built his terror squad. Emenike’s actions suggest that he is always on the side of caution. He even addressed himself as a man of few words (TBM, 39). Akwaeke is the beautiful maiden, who though was betrothed to Nwabueze, was forcefully taken away by Amauche. Amauche’s lust for her marks the beginning of his downfall in the play. Odogwu’s boldness in confronting the titled chiefs and condemning their compromise or passive stand on Amauche’s atrocities stands him out.

What this brief survey of the names of the characters and their relationship with their roles and actions shows is that the playwright’s choice of the names is not fortuitous. From the names of the characters, the audience or reader’s mindset is primed ab initio towards what to expect as their actions and attitude to issues. Each character’s role does not come as a sudden bang, but rather evolves naturally and gradually from the name. Thus, someone’s name could be a pointer to his or her traits and potentials which subsequently develops through maturation and socialization.

One can logically posit that these characters were born as kinsmen in the community. Therefore, against the background of the setting, and the incidents in the play which suggest an intertwining of natural fate and supernatural interventions, one can say that the characters’ actions should have been expected, considering their pattern of naming. If the people believe in the intervention of the gods through cosmic mix in the ecology of existence, as it played out towards the end of the play, then simple horoscope permutations could not have been discountenanced.

Another germane issue in the play, along the focus of the paper, is displacement, and this is cardinal to eco-critical studies. Displacement could be upon the natural climatic order through human activities; psychological through social trauma that affects an individual’s psychic order; cultural through contact, imperialism and indoctrination; linguistic through contact and domination of weaker languages etc.

The play under study centers on political displacement which tended to submerge the entire socio-ecological order. A society which was peacefully structured is thrown into chaos by forces of greed. The culture is profaned; people’s thought
pattern is polluted; the entire fabrics of the society are atrophied and disordered.

As captured in the synopsis, Alaike is a community that secured autonomy and is getting set to enjoy the appurtenances, part of which being the freedom to select their own leader. They had hitherto wriggled under leaders from other communities, which is characteristic of domination, a phenomenon that negates ecological justice. Okute’s eulogy on Amauche at the beginning of the play contains lexical choices that implicate the importance of liberation and freedom in the ecology of existence.

Okute: Behold, behold the great warrior of our time, people of Alaike! Behold the young fox that outwitted the lion. Here is Amauche, the toddler that protects his mother...the snail that quenches blazing fire with its slime, our boiling pot with overwhelming power to extinguish cooking fire...(TBM, 1-2).

This speech gravitates between opposites, implicating the constancy of change, the dynamism in existence, and the possibility of displacement in social structure. First, the choice of our time in the first sentence is a discourse deictic that makes particular the context of the encomium. It reminds the listener that warriors may have existed in the past but the person in reference is that of the present-day. Thus, every age and period is characterized by its own dynamics, as in what constitutes warriorhood. Probably, before this time, it could be how many human heads that one brings back from war, how many towns and villages were conquered and annexed, how many people were defeated in wrestling bouts etc. All these come from physical strength. But are they universal sources of warriorhood? The universal index is liberation and freedom from threat and attack which could also be achieved through the application of mental strength, wisdom and wit, as implicate in the local idioms and figures of expression that laced the speech. Amauche did not win a physical war for his people, but an intellectual war. He used his academic training and social exposure to win liberation for his people. His people were faced with political domination which affected their whole existence including the psycho-emotional, as expressed by Amauche in his vote of thanks to the rousing welcome organized for him:

Because Egwuagu has a military son-in-law in government, and partly because Alaike was yet to produce an influential personality within the government circles, we lost the battle. Bitterly, we nursed our humiliation, and accepted our fate (TBM, 3).

It is obvious from this speech that the people of Alaike faced more of psychological vandalism than the physical. It is not that Alaike people did not have people who can fight physical battles, but they were challenged by psychological defeat which continually displaced them from their rightful position as equal human beings in human ecology. This positions them disadvantageously and handicaps them from protecting their lands and their women, as Chukwu, Okeke and Obiokoye (2018) observe that “the manner of relationship that humans keep with each
other is crucial in addressing the ecological crisis and dislocations in the society… Thus, social ecological aspect of discourse connects the natural, economic, social, political, cultural and other ecological existence” (38). So, when Amauche states:

**How it pained us! Egwuatu turned our women to slaves and our males to slave drivers. To cap the insult, our lands were confiscated by them and some of our women were raped in farms (TBM, 3),**

the key words in this excerpt are *pained* and *insult*. Others are supporting expressions that help in explaining what constitute the pain: *Egwuagu turned our women to slaves... and the insult: our lands were confiscated*....

The trajectory of the pain and insult cuts across various forms of subversion of eco-harmony:

- physical (turned our males to slave drivers)
- emotional (our women were raped)
- social (our lands were confiscated)
- cultural (our women were raped in farms) etc.

Further in the examination of the implications of Okute’s choice of language in praise of Amauche’s *warriorhood*, we consider the contrapuntal positioning of images to suggest strength and weakness, which are archetypal opposites in eco-politics. Consider the following words as paradigms, as well as their adjacency pairing.

**Weak**
- Fox
- Toddler
- Snail

**Strong**
- Lion
- Mother
- Blazing fire

In eco-politics, the assumption is that the weak is oppressed by the strong, such as in nature being oppressed by human quest and activities (deep ecology); the poor being exploited by the rich (social ecology); the female being dominated by the male through the instruments of culture (ecofeminism); weaker languages being dominated by the stronger languages (ecolinguistics) etc. Therefore, the expectation in eco-discourse is a reversal of this imbalance, creating equality of survival and respect for every entity in the eco niche. It is against this background that Amauche’s *warriorhood* can be appreciated, when he is considered as someone who helped in achieving this balance in existence through the liberation of his people from imperial domination. More so, associating him with those paradigms of weakness is an insinuation of hope of triumph for the weak in the face of atrocious persecution by the strong. However, that the source of this freedom and liberation turns out to bring disaster to people smacks of utmost perfidy, hence a form of dislocation of hope. Consider the tone of reverence that begins Okute’s speech:

**Behold, behold the great warrior of our time**

It is worthy of note that prior to the autonomy status which Amauche helped the community to realise, Alaike had existed as an organized society with entrenched culture and tradition, political
and administrative structure with well defined administrative portfolios. Therefore, one would have expected the autonomy status to consolidate this existing cohesion and not to subvert it. Amauche attests to this expectation in his initial pretentious assurances that he had no intention of usurping the traditional throne.

Amauche: Granted, we are heading towards development with a lot of civilization, yet civilization is nothing without a strong foundation from our tradition, especially when it involves leadership in Alaike, we have a laid down procedure for leadership. I heard my mother mention more than twice that the leadership of this land lies on the shoulder of Ikoku’s family. Ibe Ikoku may be dead, but he has a son who is the rightful person to rule Alaike autonomous community (TBM, 8).

The tone of this speech is no doubt concessionary. Two conditions are antithetically juxtaposed: need for civilization and need to preserve the culture of the people. However the speech concedes to protecting the culture. But Amauche’s further assurance sets in motion the journey towards the displacement of this culture which his speech admits deserves protection.

Amauche: I have no intension of usurping your throne, people of Alaike. But your proposal a moment ago has set me thinking…As a political scientist, I want to make sure Alaike experiences the best political system possible. In order to bring this community back to her normal structure, where happiness, peace and unity reign supreme, I am compelled to accept your proposal. Our society is fast changing. Therefore, there’s need to change with time. So I will send Ikoku’s son to overseas to acquire formal education…while he’s away, I’ll like to be given the privilege to… (TBM, 8)

In this excerpt, however, Amauche smartly adopts the logic of deduction to conceal his destructive mission. The justification of his desire for the stool is premised on the following:

But your proposal a moment ago has set me thinking (based on the people’s request)

As a political scientist I want to make sure Alaike experiences the best political system (based on his training which of course brought the autonomy)

In order to bring the community back to her normal structure (based on the community’s need)

Our society is fast changing (based on society’s need)

Therefore… (his stand)

By structuring his speech deductively, advancing cogent premises for his stand, Amauche smartly exonerates himself from possible suspicion or accusation of forcefully taking over what is not his, or displacing the course of the culture of the people. None of the reasons he has given smacks of selfish intention. But subsequent developments prove Amauche’s speeches to be political cants characterized by infidelity to the original intents. Thus the displacement that
crawled like the creeping stem caught the people unprepared. Let us consider other excerpts from the play which support the creeping movement.

Uduka: What nonsense message is this? I thought we agreed that Amauche is only going to act as an interim community coordinator or caretaker. How come this message about coronation or is it installation? (TBM, 13).

Displacement is a gradual process that culminates to the final death of the weak. It initially comes wearing the garb of the weak or minor; gradually weakens the strong or the major to death; then it takes over the entire system. Displacement does not happen mechanically. There is usually the bait: economic, social, political or other advantages. It is the bait that beclouds the people’s sense of reasoning so much so that the corrosion gradually grows unnoticed.

Amauche has been given a chance to coordinate, but he now wants a coronation as the substantive leader. The promise of civilization that exists in Amauche as a metaphorical figure remains stronger. Consider the following dialogue by some of the characters.

Uduka: I have nothing against Amauche, but common sense warns me that all that glitter are not gold (TBM, 16).

Nwabueze: Forget that! Amauche will bring civilization and development to wipe off archaic traditions… (TBM, 17).

It is obvious from the dialogue that Amauche has assumed two images: as a person and as a symbol of civilization. Uduka has nothing against him as a person, but against what he symbolizes, which, from the idiom, is deceptive. Nwabueze is not attracted by Amauche as a person but believes in what he symbolizes and is convinced about its potency. Unfortunately Nwabueze becomes the first victim of the so-called civilization as Amauche coverts his betrothed, Akwaeke:

Amauche: Akwaeke, let me refund his expenses. A beautiful girl like you should not waste your life with a poor, uneducated and village hunter…a village warrior. A girl like you deserves to be a queen. You will enrich and beautify my palace as a queen, than if you play the wife of a local hunter, a stark illiterate…Oh Akwaeke, imagine what transformation your life will be. Won’t you like it? (TBM, 24)

Notice that the “archaic traditions” in Nwabueze’s speech stands as a hyponym, and Amauche’s use of “poor, uneducated, village hunter, village warrior” contextually serve as co-hyponyms under the expression. They suggest the different forms of archaic life which Amauche has come to eradicate. Ironically, in Amauche’s summation, Nwabueze is a symbol of archaism that should be displaced. Thus two modes of displacement are implicated in this incident:

a. Amauche physically and emotionally displaces Nwabueze in the love relationship with
Akwaeke. Nwabueze becomes traumatized, and his challenge to Amauche results to his assassination.

b. There is cultural displacement, as Amauche uses his position to nullify what had hitherto been perfected culturally. Again, we refer back to Nwabueze’s reference to Amauche as someone who would bring civilization to replace archaic traditions. Analogously reading this with Amauche telling Akwaeke that Nwabueze is uneducated and should be discarded, we conclude that Nwabueze and Amauche are contrapuntal symbols thus:

**Amauche**       **Nwabueze**

Civilization       culture  
Education          illiteracy  
Riches             poverty

If Nwabueze had seen through a future mirror that the so-called civilization would consume his love, hope, passion, and ultimately his life, obviously he would have fought against it.

Furthermore, Amauche’s civilization does not have Nwabueze as an individual victim, but rather, the entire community and its ecological cohesion are engulfed. Amauche turned life in the community upside-down. Consider the following excerpts and their import on the manner of existence in the community:

**Amauche:** That’s a good idea. A church will be welcomed to the people. With its modern ideology, the church will enable me influence the social and religious life of the people. After all, he who pays the piper dictates the tunes (*TBM*, 43).

Notice that contrary to what was seen at the beginning, Amauche’s speech no longer clouds his real intention. With pretentious speeches, he crawled into power; he has assumed the throne hence his language has become assertive. When the Chief Priest of the community resisted his quest at subverting and displacing the culture of the people, the Chief Priest was humiliated and his life threatened by Amauche thus:

**Amauche:** But not any more. The days of that deity is over, and let me warn you, don’t show your face around here again… (*TBM*, 53).

The Chief Priest became traumatized and culturally displaced, hence he approached the gods for supernatural intervention:

**Chief Priest:** …Ikenga Ike agwu agadi, you directed the ancestors to crown the Ikoku’s family as the ruling family in Alaike…Our ancestors obeyed you until Egwuatu came and changed your decision…I, Izudike was detained by young blood thirsty men of Alaike. Instead of towing the steps of our forefathers, the elders have joined in demolishing our tradition in the guise of civilization… (*TBM*, 52)

Perhaps, it is Akwaeke’s admonishment to Amauche that sums the idea of cultural displacement in the play.
Akwaeke: I know you have a strong desire to modernize Alaike, hence your interest in the new generation church, but your actions to ikenga shrine is like quitting a good tenant for an unknown stranger. It may be disastrous (TBM, 57).

True to Akwaeke’s admonition, the Chief Priest’s invocation of the spirit of ikenga produces the disaster.

Chief Priest: Ikenga Alaike, the god of our fore fathers, I greet you. come, drink to your health. Your abode, your sacred shrine has been destroyed, desecrated and defiled by Amauche Ijeka. Please Ikenga, torment not your children rather hold him responsible that initiated the idea…Reveal yourself as you did in the past and cleanse our land from all pollution. When Amauche brought hope and civilization to our community, we gladly welcomed it with naivity…Arise, Ikenga, arise save your people from catastrophe because beneath the infallible exterior of omnce caring ruler lies tacit bestiality… (TBM, 61-2).

The consequences of this invocation are catastrophic as it brought the death of many of Amauche’s men, police arrest of some of them for various offenses, confession to evil deeds and so on.

**Conclusion**

From the analyses so far, some deductions are possible. First is that pollution comes in different forms, and affects different aspects of the ecology, both the deep and the social aspects of ecology. However, since the different segments of the ecology are intertwined, it is important to guard against every possible threat, because the pollution of one would have a multiplier effect on the others. In the play, the utmost target of Amauche was to capture political power and impose his own brand of leadership on the community, but the consequences were colossal: displacing the culture of the people, traumatizing the psyche of the people, subverting the value systems, desecrating the sanctity of human life, and an almost total destruction of the eco alcove.

Again, the analyses reveal that, threat to the ecology does not come as a sudden bang, but creeps gradually until the existing structure collapses. In the play, it began with the people’s sincere show of appreciation to Amauche. Someone suggested giving him the leadership of the community and the community innocently bought into the suggestion, expecting a more civilized brand of leadership that would improve the lives of the people. With the leadership power at his disposal, Amauche turned to be a dictator. His insatiable thirst for power gradually resulted to a total dislocation of the people; in the same manner that the thirst for wealth and technological advancement leads to the devastation of the natural environment.

Furthermore, there is always the attractive bait which lures people into ignorantly surrendering to ecological pollution, be it environmental or cultural: opportunity for wealth, quest for power, need for change and civilization.

Therefore, the major conflicts in the play under study implicate a conflict between an organized traditional status quo and the
incursion of civilization. The results suggest that with the quest for civilization, the ecological peace, synergy, cohesion and its general architecture are always prone to the dangers of gradual desecration and subversion. Therefore, from the characters’ choice of language in their dialogue, the playwright projects as her major literary message that not all that glitter are gold.

References


[www.uvm.edu/~aivakhiv/eco_cult.htm](http://www.uvm.edu/~aivakhiv/eco_cult.htm).
