

**ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS AND LITERARY COMMUNICATION:
AXES OF DISCOURSE IN IFEANYI IZUKA'S *TRAVAILS OF
THE BLACK GOLD***

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Abstract

This paper is focused on a reading of Ifeanyi Izuka's *Travails of the Black Gold* (Black Gold) from the ambience of literary communication in order to examine the encoding stratagems contrived in the fictional narrative to convey causal chains of economics and ecology as informational content compatible with material practices in material worlds. The analysis is guided by the understanding that every element of a literary text, even apparent violations of expectations of any sort, is assumed to be designed as communicative, just as intention and its signaling via contextualization cues are conventionally treated as purposeful and meaningful acts. It is posited in this work that through adroit discourse strategies, Izuka's narration conveys effective information and presents a plausible dialogue on the experiences of the Niger Delta people of Nigeria from the ambience of activist economic and environmental witnessing. In other words, the writer uses the text as medium for encoding economic and environmental messages that affect the econiche, and for exploring human conditions and values as characters react to extraordinary economic and ecological situations that have universal application.

Keywords: Ecological economics, Literary communication, Axes of discourse.

Introduction: Ecological Economics and Literary Communication

Ecological Economics and Literary Communication consist in a multidisciplinary conversation that cuts across economics, environmental studies and literary discourse analysis. In addition to their common etymological root from the Greek "oikos"—house or place to live—both economics and ecology focus on how organisms interact in their environment, support themselves and interact with one another. As generally conceptualized, economics is the study of the production, distribution, or transfer and consumption of wealth in human society. As sustainability science, it studies the links among the economic, social and ecological systems. Eco-economics is seen as being concerned with the relationship between economic and environmental systems, environmental system being the biological and physical world. The idea is that the economy as a subsystem of the larger human environmental system, in addition to its primary emphasis on efficiency in mainstream economics, must consider the objectivities of efficiency, equity and sustainability of the natural resources and environment in both production and consumption. Environmental goods, services and amenities can be bought, sold and traded, saved or invested like any other commodity in a closed market system that must, if it is functioning properly, grow or expand (Nadeau, 2011). There is an inextricable link among economics, ecology and literature. For instance, Watts and Smith (1989) are convinced that literature may shape public opinion and standards on economic issues, just as economics thought directs literature and language.

Further advancing this discourse, they state that economics insights can be gained from analysis of literature works, especially as many literary works describe analytical economics concepts accurately. In other words, economic activities provoke communications and narrations by writers of fiction and nonfiction and model perception of relationship among humanity and other inhabitants in society. Just the same, ecocriticism espouses the relationship between literature and the environment. According to Estok (2005), ecocriticism is any theory that is “committed to effecting change by analyzing the function—thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise—of the natural environment, or aspects of it, represented in writing that contribute to material practices in material worlds”(pp.16-7). Though veritable schools of thought in economics and in literary studies, eco-economists and ecocritics are mindful of the fact that no one reads economics or environmental textbooks for fun, and that the best way to get thoughts about these areas across to the audience is to portray them as art forms that integrate causal chains of thought development between standard economic and ecological theories. Beyond the romanticism of the art-for-art’s-sake quip, the great artistic value of literature as committed imaginative writing lies in the creative introduction of new worlds of economic, environmental, social, political and other varied experiences of men in fictional society with clear links to reality in its engagement. Through an icastic simulation of real persons in real society, literature serves as window for getting individuals and groups to empathize on economic and ecological formulations, and even contribute to social transformation directed towards meeting basic human needs and enhancing quality of life in society. Thus, Literary communication—the transmission of a written or spoken text between a sender and a receiver—focuses on the interaction of the reader with the author as a creative act that transmits a message or informational content through linguistic choices and discourse stratagems. Akin to the audience reception theory or encoding-decoding model of communication, textual analysis in literary communication examines how readers connect “factionally” and emotionally to the life-world and anxieties and dedications of characters’ economic, social, historical and environmental situations in the text. According to Holub (1984), this entails, first of all, that readers construct a mental representation of the narrator's knowledge, perspective, and goals; and second, that they cooperate with the narrator by interpreting the characters and events in the described world in a way that makes the narrator's stance rational and justified.

This paper is a reading of Ifeanyi Izuka’s *Travails of the Black Gold (Black Gold)* from the ambience of literary communication in order to examine the encoding stratagems contrived in the fictional narrative to convey causal chains of eco-ecology as informational content compatible with material practices in material worlds. It is posited in this work that Izuka’s narration presents a plausible discourse on the experiences of the Niger Delta people of Nigeria from the ambience of activist economic and environmental witnessing. In other words, the writer uses literature as medium for encoding economic and environmental issues that affect the econiche, and for exploring human conditions and values as characters react to extraordinary economic and ecological situations that have universal application to all individuals. In decoding literary communication as pragmatic reading of notations, the assumption, in the words of Johnstone (2008,p.257) is that “every element of a literary text is assumed to be designed with strategy in mind, so that apparent violations of expectations of any sort”—expectations about structure, about genre, about participants, about medium, about intention and its signaling via contextualization cues—“are conventionally treated as purposeful and meaningful.”

Black Gold as Environmental and Economic Narrative

Black Gold is cast in the frame of instrumental aesthetics and creative disruption that interrogates the challenges of economic shift among a local populace in the Niger Delta Area of Nigeria. The text corals rabid exploitation and forceful expropriation of their crude oil resources, exploitation by the Nigerian Federal Government and multinational oil companies, as well as the dis-eases of their pristine existence and pollution of their environment. Quite like Okpewho's *Tides* (2003), Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* (2006) and Inno Ejike's *Oil at My Backyard* (2001) Izuka's text focuses on such variegated challenges as economic exploitation, resource expropriation, and unfair distribution of economic goods and burden. It also indicts the political chicanery that power these ecological wrongs, and the consequent economic squalor and restiveness they generate.

The context of this narrative is the fishing communities and villages scattered in the riverine areas of the Niger Delta, represented by the fictional Jamestown and its neighbours, where many of the events in the narrative take place. The debilitating economic and environmental experiences of Kalio and his friend, Takena, who go fishing with a low capacity dug out pirogue in the open sea, where they nearly get lost, is parable for the untold hardship an average Niger Delta dweller suffers. The fact is that with the intensification of petroleum operations in the domain of the fishing and farming communities, their traditional hub of economic activities is dislocated in a manner that turns them into victims rather than beneficiaries of industrialization: the quality and quantity of the fish they catch is on the decline, just as their economy with livelihood has gone as low as the ebbing tides. For instance, "a combination of the noise generated around the rigs, the search-light at night and the fouling of the waters of the creeks through the indiscriminate dumping of drilling wastes, have served to scare the big fish further to the high seas" (p.25). Through a quasi-frame of enumeration and cause-and-effect pattern of thought development, the text catalogues ecological wrongs against the Niger Delta and their eco-environmental implications. These include: reduced life span due to exposure to ecological hazards, pollution, respiratory diseases and acid rain; dumping of industrial wastes into the swamps, disappearance or migration of animal and aquatic species, the scorching heat of gas flaring, disruption of family values and the violation of the cradle through the preponderance of "militant teens, crime prone communities and a younger generation addicted to violence" (p.231). In fact, the devastation of the terrestrial and aquatic reserves of these agrarian communities is so total that "their streams are polluted by films of oil, as well as by noise pollution from the seismic explosions and the activities of the oil companies".

Similarly, "the movement of the companies also destroyed the ancestral shines and graves of their forebears" (p.194), just as "the scorching heat of gas flaring is affecting all things in the area, plants, animals and humans alike" (p.228). Thus, there is narrative bonding between industrialization as symbol of increased economic activity, as it were, and environmental negative externalities. Robert Neadeau (2008) defines environmental externalities as environmental goods and services that are 'external' to the market system in the sense that they are presumed to exist outside of the allegedly lawful or law-like dynamics of the system. Negative externalities, like pollution and destruction of biodiversity as environmental burden, happen when production or consumption of one economic actor such as in oil exploration activities affect another, the rural dwellers, who did not pay for the goods produced or consumed. Environmental burden reflects market failure as the cost of pollution for instance is not factored into the desires and constraints of oil bearing communities.

To the eco-environmentalists, prices are right when economic actors in a market system make optimal decisions that factor in the prices or values of environmental goods and services as well as externalities. Thus, Izuka draws attention to the economic losses

associated with decrease in the consumption of environmental goods and services, and the need to grandly minimize the environmental costs. This position extra textually resonates the eco-economists' concept of Pareto optimality, that is, a hypothetically idealized state or condition where it is impossible to reallocate resources to enhance the utility of one economic actor without reducing that of another (Neadeau, 2008). In the context of Izuka's narration, Pareto optimality as a level of efficiency, cannot be attained since the utility of oil production and exploration appears weak beside the economic burden of environmental costs and sundry negative externalities.

By etching vignettes of oil pollution, this writer corrals ugly glimpses into its horror, and presents a protracted sense of devastation and loss of economy and place. In the main, the prettifying palliatives of the pre-crude era in the Niger Delta as *given* information are overshadowed by the torque and bite from *new* information: pollution and toxicity harbingered by crude (oil) exploration activities bereft of professional ethics and commensurate duty of care in the oil boom era. This counterpart narrative implicates contrastive discourse and tends to underlie the eco-economists' matrix that increased economic output has some very destructive environmental impacts, and accounting for the deprivation of natural capital is a necessary part of the economic process. The boundaries of the economy remain within the boundaries of the ecosystem. Thus, rather than being treated as an abstract input-output system, environmental goods and burden should be factored in accounting for the state of the economic system.

Thus, Izuka demonstrates that environmental economics has close affinity to environmental justice, environmental justice being social transformation directed towards meeting basic human needs and enhancing the quality of life of individuals by ensuring economic equality, adequate health care and housing, as well as human rights and environmental protection (Estok, 2005). In linking environmental and social justice issues, the environmental justice approach seeks to challenge the abuse of power that leads to poor people suffering the effects of environmental damage caused by the greed of others. The focus is on how minority populations with few economic alternatives or limited economic powers are subjected to environmental hazards. The kind of transformation ecojustice seeks is based on basic human needs and enhancing the quality of lives of individuals in the areas of education, economic equality, health care, housing, crime and unemployment as well as environmental protection (*Wikipedia*).

Taken together, the poaching multinational companies (with the conniving Nigerian government) become, as it were, industrial capitalists that inevitably subdue pastoralism, and pollute natural habitats dizzy. As discourse implicative, this pervading trope of social ecology is narrative inversion and a paradigm shift from the Delta deep green past, and foregrounds environmental degradation and land rights abuses as ecological devastation and devaluation. Thus, the narrator comments on the present global environmental challenges by urging the need for economic actors to stop the reckless and profligate fossil fuel economy and urges industrialists bent on making mindlessly large profits to embrace some environmentally friendly practices that maintain life rather than bring down the ecologically sustaining systems. Through the use of descriptive details, this writer projects an environment that has become a crude victim of industrialization and which is at the spasm of extinction, as well as brings to the fore the trauma of those paying for the cost of eco-devastation and rabid industrialization with their lives. Thus, through implicit discourse subversion, Izuka rejects the narrow self-interest economy practiced by oil companies by bringing the blunt narrations from broken pipelines, ravaged farmlands and polluted waters and impoverished dwelling of the Niger Delta people to the fore. This way he forges powerful narrative empathy: the power to imagine oneself in another's place. This textual responsiveness makes it easier for the reader to envision a world

that is dangerously slipping away and serves as fillip towards propagating the end of pollution, life of squalor and economics of selfishness, where the price of environmental degradation and the attendant distress on its dwellers are not factored in the matrix for computing the real cost of production. It also brings to the foreground the need to re-examine every economic activity that is bound to wreck the world in an environment that is certainly not infinite. By analytic extension, there is an intertextual resonance here: This position aligns with an eco-ecological postulation that accounts of gross domestic product and gross national product should reflect the costs of pollution, general environmental degradation and deterioration of environmental resource base in order to reflect real pictures of the relationships between human systems and environmental systems. For instance, in the World Bank Report of Environmental Accounting and Sustainable Development (1989), a measure of sustainable income is required in standard GDP measures which should include not only income derived from production, but also income from depleting natural costs such as forests, soils, and mineral resources, petroleum depletion, forests loss, soil erosion, as well as defensive expenditures such as costs of cleaning up oil spills or dealing with radioactive wastes.

Thus, Daly and Cobb (1989) have proposed “index of sustainable economic welfare” as an alternative to GNP, which divides natural income accounts into sectors and imposes standards of sustainability as well as equity on these sectors. Application of this index reveals that most apparent economic growth in the GNP calculus is a delusion in its failure to account for losses in natural capital. Just the same, when Robert Repetto (1989) and Kirk Hamilton (1994) factored in resource depletion and environmental damage to calculate net savings in national economies, they arrived at the conclusion that earlier costs based on GDP had produced distorted results and that the use of GEP as alternative index demonstrates that increased economic output has some very destructive environmental impacts. This rhetoric of economic growth without development is implicated in the environment of the oil bearing communities who can at best be described as victims rather than beneficiaries of oil production. Economic formulation should factor in the environmental costs of production and development in order to function as the best indicator of human satisfaction. That is, economic confabulations—pollution, corruption, exploitation, poverty, expropriation, hunger and pristine conditions, urban drift and (in the context of this narration) lack of duty of care for oil bearing communities become as it were, pejorative co-hyponyms of ecological dis-eases that unsettle environmental equilibrium and threaten the future of ecosystems.

The text draws attention to the wider economic inequalities where the poor bear the costs and the rich and powerful gain disproportionate economic benefits from activities that destroy the environment and debase life. Izuka tends to implicate that conventional economic rating of the purported gains of the oil boom does not reflect true economic growth or development as it falls short of considering national environmental problems and the selective impact of the gains that favour the rich but impoverish the poor waterside dwellers who bear the extreme cost of environmental burden, and economic defamiliarizations that further alienate them from mainstream business. For instance, the seeming narrative correlation between the economic benefits of industry and the local populace’s economic wellbeing is subverted, through discourse integration of the daunting environmental burden posed by such facilities. Thus in the beginning, the level of involvement of the locals were high as they easily provided the unskilled labour required for cutting the lines and digging the shot holes where the explosives were buried. “In addition the quantum of money they came home with had automatic positive impact on the communities.” (p.4). Thus, at the inception of industrialism, “the communities could not complain if only for the introduction of monetary economy with very high liquidity and attendant high purchasing power” (p.5).

However, while offer for jobs tend to weaken their resistance, the real cost of pollution and hazardous workplace environments and the discrimination they suffer owing to their lack of skill, for instance, absolutely whittle down the purported gains of oil drilling business in the ancestral homes of the oil bearing communities. There is, thus, a sense of workers' despair integrated in the narration, as the unskilled workers of the Niger delta extraction bemoan their lowly status within the industry, and dis-location from economic shift: The indigenes among the oil workers do only menial jobs as "recruits" and serve as "line cutters for the (oil) crew" (p.9), while those in the creeks are "condemned to combing the barren creeks because fishing is the only trade that [they] know" (p.51). They bemoan not only the unsafe working conditions, but also unsatisfactory living conditions, terribly low wages, using the concentration of capital on a few foreign and alien hands as counter narrative. Note that in the pragmatic reading of eco-ecological notations, the promise of employment and benefits of development the local residents are *given*. What is *new* information is the consequent hazardous effects and environmental impact assessment of these oil exploration activities which are not factored into the comprehensive calculation of the real economic benefits of such industries cited at the backyard of poor communities.

Conveyed in third person and all-knowing narrative that put the reader at the frontline of feeling, the text portrays close witnessing of the sufferings of the ancestral communities who live below the poverty line in a squalid environment without portable water, electricity and medical facilities despite the exploration of the liquid gold in their backyard. Taxi, one of the youth activists, adroitly paints the extreme distress from the denials of ecological goods of the ancestral dwellers who must watch strangers drill the oil God has placed right under their feet. The grime analogy here taxes the local idiom of feeling: "Pit or bucket, there were just no latrines around. Children were passing feaces into the water on one side of the port and drinking the same water from the other side... the same water that provides home for all manner of human excretion supplies both the domestic and drinking water" (pp.45-6). The narrator employs rhetoric of contrast in the depiction of the opulent oilmen quarters versus the scummy slum waterside dwelling of the fictional Jamestown as tactical contrapuntal narration that underlies the grim consequences of poverty and denial occasioned by economic growth without environmental development. Thus, quite unlike the oddity and putrescence that characterise Jamestown waterside dwelling, oil men reside in Igwe Ocha "the place where light shines perpetually on the sky" (p.18). Note that the disconcerting frame of defamiliarizations that the apt choice of "Igwe Ocha" as spruce onomasticon and provincial term for state of Eldorado is so total that the two friends could not help wandering: "can two of us ever get to know that place?" (p.18). This rhetorical confabulation highlights the desperate need of the ancestral dwellers to escape from their "miserable environment" (p.18), full of "dry and dreary life" (p.20). There is copious dig into the oppression and abject poverty of the rural dwellers in the oil drilling econiche as an oppressive system that barely supports the economic and environmental needs of the ancestral owners of the liquid black gold. This narrative disruption of the initial, but temporary, gains of oil exploration in the wetlands is highlighted by rhetoric of affirmation where traditional rulers and their subjects assert the curse of oil in plain declaratives. For instance, through the Ogbaa of Ogbaland, textual attention is drawn to the people's odious economic and environmental experiences: "Yes my people are also victims of this new wealth... my people have lost their farmlands to the oil companies. The heat coming from the flares has scorched our economic crops. Our streams no longer provide drinking water to my people. A film of oil from the drilling waste permanently covers the surface of the streams" (p.268). Further still, the narrator uses the experiences of Kalio, a Jamestown dweller, to affirm the people's distraught experiences: "Oil operations have brought disaster to our lives. The span of our lives is reducing by the

day because of the level of our toiling and the attendant stress. The future of our children is very bleak because we are confused as to the legacy we want to bequeath to them (p.57). According to Scott Slovic (1992) economics aims to understand the activities of the different agents in the economy—consumers, producers and the government—and how they all fit together. The knowledge base for the creation of an ecologically sustainable economy is in increasing awareness that global life support systems are endangered, and the need to realize that decisions made on the basis of short term criteria can produce disastrous results of a global scale.

By focusing on the environmental impacts of oil exploration activities on the NigerDelta econiche, Izuka tends to affirm through discourse extension that production is awash with concomitant wastes that make apologists of neoclassical economics and their sense of indefinite economic growth quip frivolous and counterproductive. Global costs like climate change, mass extinction, pollution, deforestation, and toxic movement should be factored into real calculation of economic growth and cost of production. This way, the narration motivates “audiences to live within a limit that will be binding over generations.” (*Wikipedia*) Thus, eco-economics quite like the environmental justice movement “secures ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting profitable economic and social development” (*Wikipedia*). The unfortunate situation in the Niger Delta area is such that the oilmen take over their resources, their wives, their lives, destroy their culture and bequeath their children with eco-economic disaster and a hunched-back future of confused legacy.

While the position of the rulers are devised to gain discourse support through ethical appeal, the narrator frames rhetorical support by involving the subjects, especially the youth activists, who equally vent their gory experiences and thus affirm the total effect and complete rejection of the economic and environment curses of oil exploration in the Niger Delta. Through a pejorative rhetoric of denial, Opuyi, one of the activists and victim of economic emasculation, laments the lack of duty of care by the government and oil firms doing business in the area. These government agencies and oil firms expropriate the gains from the resources to develop other lands while the oil bearing communities wallop in degradation, abject poverty and squalor. It is thus regrettable that “the money they get from the oil is changing the lives of many people other places both in Nigeria and the Whiteman’s home except here” (p.118). In a series of parallel rhetorically-laced interrogative structures, the narrator vents his frustration through inquisitives each with considerable overlap: “Why should they not be spending part of the money here where the oil comes from? Why can’t the government encourage our people to form fishing cooperatives and equip them to be able to face the challenges of modern fishing?” (p.119). As discourse strategy, rhetorical questions or soliloquies are used to frame silences in the speech of the distressed who are too overwhelmed to confront the source(s) of their trauma. Still advancing this message of economic denial and eco-devastation, Opuyi, Halliday’s friend adds: “If the authorities can commit just a small fraction of the money they make from the area towards developing it, the difference will be clear for everyone to see. But what do we have now: squalor, abject poverty, despair and desperation” (p.50).

The logic tends to be that equitable distribution of wealth and effective global integration of markets must go hand in hand with efforts to safeguard the natural environment and must factor in equitable distribution of environmental goods and burden across rich and poor populations. This tends to explain the eco-ecologists’ gruesome statistics of affected groups of environmental injustice: “Poor people account for more than 20% of the human health impacts from industrial toxic air releases, compared to 12.9% of the population nationwide” (*Wikipedia*) Through a narrative projection of citizens yearning for a better life in

the face of dehumanizing economic and environmental conditions, the author creatively attacks the evil of industry that thrives at the expense of the individual, or a section of the society, and interrogates industrialism's dehumanizing effect on the worker as outgrowth. Izuka tends to affirm the ecological economists' position that economic value of production or industrialization is situational and relative.

In addition to poverty, appalling salubrious conditions, oppression and abject misery of workers who are reduced to mimic men, Izuka broaches the issue of sex and seduction in the industrial area as well as disintegrating family values. Thus the text presents high level whoring by married women among the poor fishing population for consideration as inadequate as hard drink and, as ridiculous as, opportunity to sleep in a soft mattress. As their means of sustenance dwindle, family bond and family values disintegrate, and their men, who are doomed to fishing barren creeks and cultivating unyielding farms, or participating in increased menial labor activities in the oil firms are "reduced to part-time husbands or no husbands at all" (p.229). In the pragmatic reading of economics and ecological notations, this puts to the fore the oppression of industrialization within the context of family as basic social unit; and in a dominantly subsistence economy like Nigeria, a disintegration of the family system semiotizes a total collapse of the economic system.

Advancing the macro discourse of colonialisms, Izuka condemns the British and the American governments who care less about the suffering of oppressed peoples, but only pursue exploitative policies that ensure the steady supply of cheap source of energy for their economies (p.255). Thus, the narrator indicts the exploitative activities of the multinational oil companies and Lebanese executives whose "interest was drilling the oil and making profit with little concern for ecological consequences to the environment of the oil producing areas" (p.163). This indictment is also in tandem with the neocolonial discourse that interrogates the genuineness of global liberalization of trade between the West and Africa. The position is that Africans are disabled economically by their historical contacts with the West, which bequeathed them with a slim bargaining power that makes it impossible for them to partake meaningfully in global economic relations.

By projecting a gruesome image of the extreme exploitation and expropriation of oil resources in the poor and minority groups, Izuka draws attention to the tragedy of the commons in the way the upper class—the white oil drillers, the government agencies, the military administrator and even local chiefs—provoke the suffering of the poor through their over-consumption and gruesome exploitation of natural resources. According to Hardin (1968), a commons is any area where property rights regimes do not apply and users have open access to its exploitation. He used the example of a common grazing land where each cattle owner continues to enlarge his or her herd as long as doing so increases his income. Since each owner derives all the economic benefits from the sale of his cattle, and since the loss of grazing resources consumed by the cattle is borne by all the other owners, the tragedy is that all owners will increase the numbers in their herds to the point at which the grazing capacity of the land is utterly depleted or destroyed.

The ecological challenge here is that exploiters of common resources have little incentive to conserve them and a great deal of incentive to recklessly exploit them before others can do so. Thus, Mr. Harold, a foreign oil company executive, confesses ironically that they are "here to stay" because "the profit margin is still very attractive in spite of the eighty-five per cent PPT rate and the constant extortions by the communities." He also explains that "there is no other place in the world you make as much profit as you do in this country", especially as "the government participates in the funding without having adequate capability to monitor the operations especially with regards to the manner the money is spent". Moreover, "it is only in this country that [oil] services are priced for and paid for in foreign

currency” (pp.140-1). Adopting Hardin’s (1968)analogy, each exploration company quite like each cattle owner in a common grazing land continues to enlarge his herd or production base as long as doing so increases his income because each company or owner derives all the income benefits from the sale of his cattle or crude. And, since the cost of grazing or exploration resources consumed by his cattle or company is borne by all the other owners, the tragedy is that all owners will increase the numbers of their herds to the point at which the grazing capacity of the land is utterly depleted or destroyed.The implicature here is an exploitative ethos that semiotizes the polemics of mindless institutional expropriation and ecological pillage. Thus, to the oil company, the ultimate desire is to “win contracts, to make profit and stay in business” (p.126), and to the government, the desire in the poetics of Ogaga Ifowodo (2005, p.28), tends to be “to protect our oil revenue at all costs”.

Still projecting the theme of neglect and denial, Halliday, another youth activist asks: “Has anyone, right from the first day of oil export from this country to date, from the initial production of 5100 barrels per day from the Oloibiri field to the current daily level of over one million barrels, given a thought to the plight of the oil producing areas and their peoples?” (p.49).These cavalier polemics of layered exploitation also connect with the illogic of colonialism as altruism, and rightly reposition it as a complex of policies, projects and moves designed to strangle the common person under the double yolk of imperial lords and their internal compradors, using Marxist terms. As extended discourse common in macroeconomics, it also disables the notion of equitable gains in the experience of globalization as harbinger of free trade and fair economic competitiveness. In this narrative, Izuka does not agree with Pignon’s (1932) position in the economics of welfareand tends to argue that emissions charges or fees is not an efficient and effective regulatory method to curtail negative externalities, as they do not reduce the quantity nor improve the quality of pollution by making the polluters assume a portion of the costs for every unit of harmful pollution they release into the environment.That is, taxes are never equal to the marginal social and environmental cost associated with the externality. Thus,serving as spokesperson for the oil firms and expatriates, Mr. Harold reveals: “We always know how to get our money back. On paper, Nigeria’s industry tax rate is the highest in the world. But what difference does it make, all said and done, tax is net after expenses” (p.141).What is favoured here is Coase’s (1960)postulation that environmental resources should be owned and made to exist within the domain in which the mechanism of market processes operate. Thus, there is need to revise the legal system to allow for private ownership of environmental resources; such that the real marginal value of preserving air quality or eliminating toxic wastes can be inferred using a hedonic price function that allows environmental variables to be given an approximate monetary value.

In the extra-textual reading of notations, it is possible to connect this position with the logic for resource control. The conference on resource control Izuka summons in the fictional geography of *Black Gold* favours the inclusion of all interests and opinions—youths and elders in the upland and inland areas. The narrator’s idea of micro-minority discourse based on resource-control occludes an essential strand in economics and ecological rights. He opts “for a united Nigeria, but one that respects the rights and wishes of the minorities” (p. 273). Thus, the narrative bent in this text favours discourse of inclusion and adequate representationas a“way of making this contraption called Nigeria to work without swallowing the minorities who unfortunately inhabit the oil producing areas” (p.272).

Inadequate representation of political and economic interests as the bane of minority ethnicities is also given pragmatic attention in the text as Izuka keeps to the political setting during the reas of autocratic military regime in Nigeria, and fronts the rulers as accessories to the crime against the Niger Delta econiche. The under representation (or even lack of

representation) of the ethnic minorities consign them to silences, and open them for plunder by the majority nationalities. Thus, apart from the expatriate oil workers and their firms, the Northern military elites are also implicated as frontline actors in the odious environmental devastation experiences etched through subtle allusions to “the authorities in Nigeria who want to run a federation like an emirate”, [and] “the centre dominated by people from one part of the country bent on controlling resources from another part” (p.216). Similarly, the very corrupt and plutocratic Colonel Dankyaba, the military administrator that has turned the garden city into a city of garbage, is an adroit choice of onomasticon as provincial term potent with ethnic allusions to the North. In addition, the “many sacks of Ghana-must-go bags” that are loaded daily from the government house are in explicit terms, flown “to the North”, while the city, as microcosm of the Delta econiche, is overrun with refuse, pollution and poverty—negative co-hyponyms of economic devastation in the eco-economics matrix. Thus, the grouse is not just about practices of unethical forms of exploration, but that of negligence and unjust exploitation and expropriation of resources, articulated in recurring “here” and “there”, “they” and “us” as deictic of place and persons-differentiation common in contrastive discourse. For instance, articulating the theme of exploitation and denial, the narrator observes through pronominal frames of contrast that “the money *they* get from *our* oil is changing the lives of many people in many *other places* both in Nigeria and the white man’s home, except *here*” (p.118; my italics).

In addition to foregrounding the deleterious effect of an industrial environment on the individual and her/his character, narrations about (in)human spectacle are interlaced with debauchery and shocking social consequences. Thus, in *Black Gold*, the image of the virtuous woman is missing. The scandalous promiscuity of the wives and daughters in the narration is a major part of the Delta depressing tale. Poverty-induced debauchery and the perverted decoy of plenty cannot allow parents to exercise control and assert moral authority over their children, or husbands over their wives. In fact, Kalio’s wife Ibraye, actually graces Kurubo’s, an oilman’s bed the same night her husband and his friend get missing in the open sea. The women and girls indulge themselves in more whoring as the crude scape provides the forbidden opportunities, endlessly, that is. Oil workers as agents of destruction shun all nature’s elements of decency and fairness and think with their pocketful-gingered groins.

In terms of proxemics of discourse, the copious space devoted to discussing whoredom as industrial distress is quite significant. It functions as counterpart narration to give further fillip to the portrayal of environmental and economic putrescence, connotations of guile, exploitation and indecent practices that trail crude economic culture. It also projects the message of poverty and occupational shift in the face of sudden possession of excess liquidity by a few alien hands. Notice the narrative bonding between the activities of whores and conventional economic activity using generic terms and co-hyponyms of business transacting (in my italics):

The womenfolk among the inhabitants of the fishing ports and villages were not left out in the new lease of life as the goddesses of the oldest profession known to humanity were on hand to lure the women, both the young and the not so young, into invading the campsites in search of better life for rural women from the workers who were quartered in those camps. Trading in in all sorts of wares were common during the day but with nightfall, the real trading boomed when the sites were swarmed by an army of fun-seekers (p.5).

The women were also said to be facing *unfair competition* from the girls *imported* from the cities who, being *originally professionals* in their *chosen trade*, easily *out-performed*

their rural and rustic rivals (p.6). These women who would no longer accept the *life of drudgery* in the remote villages of fishing ports with the black gold literally flowing under their feet, would rather rush to the nearest township, *undergo some crash training* programmes on nightlife and rush back to locations near their bases where they hoped to enjoy *competitive edge* (p.7).

A stylometric analysis of Inala's, a city whore's, confession (p.42) comfortably situates "the oldest profession known to mankind" as generic discourse etched through combinatorics of economic valences and co-hyponyms that point to management of scarce resources. Similarly, Inala is described as *city import* that "*is not good for the purse*", as she comes with her "*mindset on money*" as "*professional in her trade*" who "*bargains so hard*" (p.44). Ibraye, a married woman from the fishing village, tends to have a comparative advantage as a "*fish girl easily happy and satisfied with little*", *cheaper*, but for the risk implicated in the caveat that as a married woman, she is "*cheap article* that may have *some hidden costs*" attached to her odious wares (p.45). Economics, after all, includes the study of ownership, use, and exchange of goods, products and services, as well as contemplation of attendant risks.

Though Izuka foregrounds the devastation and attrition of an ecosystem in a state of flux against a backdrop of increasing political contentiousness that harbingers youth restiveness and martial conflicts, in the world of *Black Gold*, youth restiveness becomes ameliorated discourse rather than hate speech. Izuka sets the theme for contemporary toxicity literature in which characters engage themselves in violence and ethnic militia activities in an attempt to find a definable essence for their environment spilled with poverty, rape, youth drunkenness and whoredom. Quite like economic protest press, the narrative advances such confrontational strategies as protests, demonstrations, hostage taking, picketing and political/media pressure and propaganda. In Izuka's narration, violence becomes the crude prize for increasing insensitivity of the multinational oil companies, the Nigerian government and the perverted Delta local leaders to human, plant and non-human lives. There is, thus, a compelling discourse shift from complacency and idle bemoaning of woes, by these victims of eco-violence and abuse, to spontaneous immediacy through militant engagement as class struggle. In the analogy of the rare big fish of life and death that keeps Kalio and Tekena in the open sea for three days, the only option open to Delta dwellers is "to present a serious fight to whatever is at the other end of the rope", because if they "allow it to pull [them] at will, [they] may end up getting lost in the open sea" of economic and ecological wreckage (p.62).

In other words, Izuka's concern is that the Niger Delta ecosystem has been devastated through oil exploration activities, and that government does not exercise commensurate duty of care; that oil spillage has led to poverty, unemployment, underemployment and youth restiveness; that there is infiltration of petrodollar lure and an alien culture that threatens the moral and social virtues of the Delta people. In this school for ecological scandal, that is the Niger Delta econiche, eco-peace becomes luxury that can only be regained psychologically through nostalgic flight to memorialization, and, physically, through attention-seeking violence, as campaign or engagement. In line with the frame of social ecology and its certain links with Marxism, the logic of restiveness with increasing militancy in the host communities becomes a revolution against acute exploitation by a people pushed beyond the pastel of humanism's grace. The spates of violence become, as it were, the only option for the lumpen proletariats, replaying, as it were, Fanon's (1968) notion of "the wretched of the earth", pushed below the poverty line by mindless state forces and exploitative brigandage of multinational (oil) companies.

Thus, following the pragmatic reading of notations in this text, *protest* acquires ameliorative thrust as resistance against economic exploitation. In the words of Tekena, the

protest is against “the white man coming here to deprive us of the resources that our forefathers left for our posterity” (p.58). Risk taking as economic matrix also acquires expanded imagism: “sometime in life...it may be necessary to take some risk. Most people who have succeeded in whatever they were doing must have been exposed one way or the other before to one risk or the other somewhere down the road....The white man took the risk of leaving his country to come here. Now he has conquered all of us and taken our oil free” (p.84). Note the discursive manipulation of the weasel nature of “risk” through deliberate semantic amelioration designed to *enframe* violence as resistance and self-assertion and, by intra-discourse relations, hostage-taking as meaningful appropriation of rent.

Izuka’s narrative bent occludes a vote for the preservation of ancestral homes/communities rather than have the people move to the city. This gives fillip to the adoption of an extratextual logic in the discourse simulation between the Niger Delta area and desert inhabitants of Libya, the United Arab Emirates, Iran and Kuwait. In an adroit appropriation of voice through free direct speech with a combination of declarative and rhetorical structures, the logic for preservation, rather than dis-location, comes through: These countries live “in harmony with their environments, making use of their God-given wealth to improve on the living conditions of their citizens, why should we run away from our heritage thereby abandoning our ancestors?” (p.48). This position is a precursor for the provision of economic goods—social amenities, schools and healthcare facilities—to the people in order to compensate meaningfully for the pollution of their environment and dis-location of their social and economic lives. Lending his voice to this position, Opuye, Halliday’s friend, agrees that “all the government did (elsewhere) was to bring water to the deserts and with that life flourished” (pp.48-9). He also argues against social and economic dis-location, stating that the inhabitants of the area should be given “quality life to enable them participate in the economic life of the nation while at the same time keeping them around their ancestral homes” (p.88).

Izuka tends to launch a counterpart discourse of problems and solutions based on the eco-ecologists’ belief in equitable distribution of environmental goods and burden. For instance, development of the natives can still be achieved through education and provision of amenities in their dwelling rather than have the waterside dwellers migrate to the city. This is the parable of Halliday who argues that rather than relocate to the city, and abandon their traditional econiche and engender overcrowding in the cities by horde of urban drift from rural dwellers without skill, the city should in fact be brought to the rural populace through provision of schools and social amenities. The idea is that “to get the way forwards right, the Niger Delta must ally their cause with other Nigerians and put more energy into educating their young ones” (p.102), and evolve positive and comprehensive eco-economic action, adding that “education is meant to add value to a people’s way of life and not to destroy it” (p.87). The starting point should be giving the inhabitants of the area quality life to enable them participate in the economic life of the nation while at the same time keeping them around their ancestral homes (p.89). Thus, through Preye, Izuka provides the logic for fostering a major strand of the Nigerian local content act: “there is enough work for all Nigerians if only the Whiteman will reduce the number of his people flooding the industry” (p.101). Also, through narrative elision and manipulation of discourse relations, the overriding dominance of economics as field of communication in the text changes education as a means to an economic end, rather than as an end in itself. Thus, through Opuyi the narrative asserts that “given the abundance of the resources in the area, each child should of right be “entitled to a decent education that should guarantee him gainful employment...education has continued to be a preserve of the rich, while the children of the poor or rather of the fishermen must continue to wallop in ignorance.” (p.117). Again, there is an extra textual

resonance here: In economics discourse, the degree of correlation between education and poverty is quite significant. Studies in economics research (Aigbokhar, 2008) revealed that households with farming heads have a higher probability of being poor, while education was the main factor in reducing the probability of being poor.

Conclusion

Communication is the exchange and flow of information and ideas from one person to another; it involves a sender transmitting an idea, information, or feeling to a receiver. Communication studies investigate various aspects of the encoding-decoding processes articulated in various texts and message encounters. A literary text comes to life and serves its purpose only when it communicates with the reader (Dijk, 1985). In the contact between the author and the reader, the writer sends a message through the text and the audience receives it. Thus in literary communication, one can look at the relationship between author and reader, text and reader, or how the text itself refers to the external world either by creating an alternative world or imitating what can be found there through references to ecological, economical, socio-historical and cultural contexts. Though the author and reader are spatially and temporally deferred from one another in most cases, the literary text itself functions as message between author and reader. The understanding is that every element of a literary text, even apparent violations of expectations of any sort, is assumed to be designed as communicative, just as intention and its signaling via contextualization cues are conventionally treated as purposeful and meaningful. In Izuka's narrative, reference—the relationship between a sign and the object it signifies—to the external world is never direct but aesthetically mediated. Izuka may not have made explicit statements, but through discourse strategies immersed in the language of indirection, he etches narrative that uses bare "facts", suggestions, references and contextualization clues in a creative way to provoke ideas in readers and confer emotional and intellectual meaning on the text: *Black Gold* as text and communication encounter, reflects ecological and economics thought as informational content through discourse strategies that bring to the fore the need to strike a dynamic balance between economic development and the ecological constraints it harbings.

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