TIN MINING DEGRADATION: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS OF HOME, LOSS AND IDENTITY

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A submission presented in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the University of Salford for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis entitled '*Tin mining degradation: autobiographical investigations of home, loss and identity*', submitted to the School of Arts and Media, University of Salford, in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is my original work carried out under the supervision of Dr Judy Kendall and Dr Ursula Hurley. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award.

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ABSTRACT

Tin mining on the Jos Plateau was the major income earner in Nigeria before petroleum was discovered in the Niger Delta region in 1958. The excavation for tin left the Plateau landscape environmentally depleted, with over forty six percent of its land filled with gullies and ponds due to tin mining. However, the discourse on environmental degradation in Nigeria is often associated with oil exploration in the Delta region, with little mention made of the Jos Plateau. The reason for the lack of emphasis is connected to the fact that very little literature about the negative impacts of tin mining degradation is available on the Jos Plateau.

To counter the rarity of material on the negative effect of tin mining, I use the tool of memory recollection to draw and reflect on my own earliest memories of the tin ponds around where I lived as a young girl. I grew up on the Jos plateau surrounded by ponds. I was warned not to go near the ponds as they were inhabited by spirits and mammy water that pulled unsuspecting inhabitants, mostly children, into their grips. (The mammy water is a mermaid that is half human and half fish, believed to inhabit a body of water). While the ponds were considered unsafe, they served as a place of escape for me. Although I was warned to stay off such dangerous ponds, I always found myself drawn to them. The ponds became my escape from home and trouble, a place to connect with the grieving spirits and perhaps, see mammy water.

From my research, it became evident that the ponds had such 'pull' because of the forceful use of dredging machines to plough the ground for tin. And because such areas were left open without fencing, they became death traps. Apart from the danger that the ponds represent physically, I have also explored how tin mining activities have resulted in the loss of lives, farmlands, homes, and sources of livelihood.

The collection of stories and poems allows me to draw on my personal experience as a member of the community of the region to tell our story, the story of living alongside tin mining and degradation. Since there is very little material available to discuss the stories of people who contributed to the tin mines, especially women, these stories and poems will function as resource material for students on the Jos plateau to understand the story behind the ponds and the black sand in their environment. (The black sand refers to the tin deposits scattered on the ground). It will serve as an historical record, helping to explain the reason for the many ponds, their nature and thus their role in the many deaths, previously explained by the community through their beliefs in spirits. This may be beneficial in terms of health and safety around the tin-ponds in the future.

PROLOGUE

One signature print of nature's endowment on the Jos Plateau is rocks and mountains built like a fence around the city. Sketches of few vegetation, many cactus and eucalyptus trees are also found on the Jos Plateau. Another characteristic feature on the Jos Plateau are the many ponds found in the city. I took the ponds as being among the many 'natural endowments' I grew up to see around me but never knew their importance or the reason why they were there. I presumed they were nature's gift to my beloved state. Little did I know they were part of my/our history and story.

As a young girl growing up in the city of Jos, there were several open ponds all over the area where I lived. I remember that we had a pond a few meters away from the house. My friends and I were oblivious of any danger that the pond presented. Rather, it was a place we built our myth around– it was the *mammy water* (water mermaid) place. There was a movie we watched called 'Splash' where the main character, a young lady was a mermaid who was half human and half fish. As children, we were fascinated at the thought of seeing one in real life. We desired to see the mythical creature so much that some of us even hallucinated we saw it occasionally. I was particularly fond of going to the pond. I secretly wished to see a *mammy water* someday. The pond was on the edge of a cliff, behind the house that served as an abandoned warehouse. To get to the pond, I had to climb a wooden ladder and then gently trample on the brown zinc roof. When rain fell, the edge of the zinc could be slippery and dangerous, yet the 'pull' for a glimpse of the water inhabitant was stronger than the fear of a fall from any slippery surface.

The pond was my go-to place, my place of safety. Once I got into trouble for organising a children's party. The house was a mess; our neighbours downstairs were upset about all the noise we made. Later that evening when my sister arrived home from work in her nurse's uniform, it was to the pond I ran to hide. The entire family and our neighbours looked for me

everywhere and could not find me. I had gone to the place of succour. Even though my sister had warned me to stay clear of the pond, my tiny feet would not let me be.

There were also tin ponds around my primary school. While I walked to school, I noticed several ponds on either side of the road. Upon enquiry as to why there were so many ponds, I was warned to stay off, but I was not told what the ponds were or how they came to be there. But as a curious youngster, together with my friends, we often found ourselves drawn to the ponds. The thought of seeing my *imaginary* friend, or of seeing my silhouette and that of my friends on the pond's surface was always a delight. The pond also provided refuge from the teacher's cane when the entire class got into trouble and served as a hide out for boys and girls to explore issues of the heart.

While in secondary school, I was in a boarding house which was about 120 km from Jos. Because it was a long way from home, I often took the '*tin city'* bus service. The transport company was named tin city transport service. I grew up knowing that Jos was referred to as tin city. What I did not know however was why it was named so. Again, I was curious about what tin city meant, but once more, I never sought answers**.** Perhaps I knew I would not get any. I was oblivious of the fact that there was a connection between the black sand that adorned the earth's surface whenever it rained and the ponds that encircled the state. The mining of tin was responsible for the many ponds around and was the symbol that the state was nicknamed after.

Years later, the significance of the pond and the black sand became evident when I lost a dear friend to the ponds. The ponds and black sand became a symbol of the script available to me, for my work. My attachment to the pond and its significance to me is a reoccurring motif in my stories. As I delve into memory to recollect my experiences, the pond is part of this journey. The black sand that I fancied as a young girl and the ponds of refuge are intertwined

to the degradation that occurred in my region. These two symbols later had a different implication to what I grew to discover. The outcome is a story, which is different from what I imagined and dreamed of. The connection between the black sand and the ponds, and then to death, and other consequent effects of tin mining is what I explore in this thesis.

MY PERSONAL CREATIVE JOURNEY

My earliest encounter with any form of creative writing was as an undergraduate at the University of Jos, Nigeria where I studied English literature. In one of the creative writing classes, the lecturer asked us individually to describe what we heard coming from the sound of heavy rainfall that was occurring that afternoon during the class. I remember using the metaphors of soldiers and drums of war to describe the cascading sound of rain on the metal roof. The lecturer was pleased with my writing and choice of metaphor, she thought I did well and commended my efforts. That was my first and only attempt at any form of creative writing for a long time.

I did not pursue this line of creativity afterwards until my fourth year, where I was expected to turn in a long essay (project) as part of my final year submission. The essay could be about a close reading of a poetry collection or an analysis of a novel. I chose to do a close reading of poetry. Incidentally, I wrote about a Niger Delta poet Tanure Ojaide. Ojaide is one of the writers from the Niger Delta region who pioneered the discourse on the degradation of the Delta environment. I could not explain why I chose Ojaide or his poetry. Looking back, I realize I have always been drawn to environmental issues—that, perhaps informed my choice of the delta region then and has informed my writing now on the Jos environment.

Another reason for the choice of a Niger Delta writer and/ or environmental writing was because after my secondary education in Plateau state, I travelled for holidays to Port Harcourt which is in the Niger Delta region where my elder sister lived. While in the region, I had the opportunity to travel to some of the local government areas and saw how oil exploration ravaged the land. This experience I believe influenced my resolve and drew my attention to write about the Niger Delta and oil exploration. In addition, having first-hand experience in the Niger Delta opened my eyes to see the impact of oil exploration that Ojaide wrote about.

I continued this quest on environmental writing when I went back for my Masters' degree at the same university where I did my undergraduate study. I continued with the works of the environmental writer Ojaide. I chose to explore the different ways he used his writing, especially poetry to advocate for a change in the environmental policies of the multinational companies in his region.

In addition to the degradation I witnessed in the Niger Delta during my visit, was the fact that the region already had an established literature decrying the degradation of their land while there was none on the Jos environment. As a matter of fact, we studied two of the Niger Delta writers (Saro-Wiwa and Tanure Ojaide) in my undergraduate days at the university. Consequently, when I came back for my masters, the Niger Delta experience appealed to my burgeoning interest in environmental discourse.

Ironically, although I grew up in Jos, and perhaps because of the lack of awareness of what the ponds around me represented, I did not reckon that the presence of the ponds could be regarded as degradation of the land. It did not occur to me that the ponds were worth mentioning as being a consequence of environmental degradation caused by tin mining. Also, even the lecturers did not think that we had environmental degradation issues on the Plateau that needed attention, or perhaps it was the case of scarcity of materials/ non availability of materials, of voices to speak for the people and the land like Ojaide and Saro-Wiwa.

I remember that when I mentioned that I was writing my Master's project on the Niger Delta to one of my lecturers (Prof. Adeiyongo), he asked me why the Niger Delta and not the Jos environment? That question bothered me as I did not understand or 'see' the evidence of the environmental degradation that he referred to on the Plateau. It did not make sense, meanwhile this was right under my nose, hiding in plain sight throughout my childhood in the Jos Plateau. Perhaps, it was the lack of emphasis of this degradation in the history or literature of the people. What we have are historical records of how tin was mined,

but not the degradation associated with tin mining. Even with the historical accounts it is at the university level that such a topic is introduced. This perhaps explains my ignorance at the magnitude of this issue.

While teaching literature at a secondary school in Jos, the curriculum encouraged the use of indigenous literature about the region. The books we had then, did not include the history of tin mining or the experiences of the people of the region. Teaching literature meant to be about the plateau without a reflection of the people's tradition was unacceptable but there was nothing I could do, or so I thought.

Years later after my Master's education, I was employed as an assistant lecturer at the state university. While at the university, we were expected to introduce our undergraduate students to indigenous Nigerian/ African literature. Most of the recommended books were from other parts of the country; the few books we had on the Jos Plateau, had nothing on the history or effect of tin mining (which is our own literature and environmental issue). Although we agreed to use indigenous books as a department, we did not get enough materials as the few available were on marriages and names in some Plateau tribes. This discovery left a nudging in my mind to do something about this gap created by a lack of availability of material. Although the desire to find a solution to this issue was there, I was unaware that I had the ability to craft something that others could read, and which could become a useful resource.

One thought that kept coming to me was the fact that if only we had written stories like the Niger Delta had, if only we had the degradation of our environment drummed in our ears and in the ears of the nation, then perhaps we would have begun this journey to discovery and voice enabling and dialogue, a long time ago. Then maybe the discourse on environmental degradation in Nigeria could begin to include the Jos Plateau which had one of the earliest experiences of environmental degradation.

My thoughts and aspirations soon became a reality when I left the shores of my country, travelling from Nigeria to Salford University in the United Kingdom for a postgraduate degree in Literature. As I have always been drawn to environmental literature/ portrayals of nature in literature, I decided to continue to write on the degradation of the Niger Delta region. However, as if destined by fate, during my first-year assessment, I mentioned the fact that in addition to the Niger Delta region, other regions in Nigeria also had environmental issues and one such area was the Jos Plateau, where I come from. I was quick to point out, however, that there was the problem of the scarcity of literature to use or start from. Then one of my assessors suggested that I start with my experience as someone who lived in the mining town as a platform from which to launch out - and I had an epiphany. The responsibility fell on me to develop materials and resources which others could use to expand this area of discourse that was emerging. I began to go down memory lane, still, I did not know how that could be incorporated into my academic work.

It was then that I was introduced to the concept of practice-as-research/practice-based research. It was new to me, I had not done or heard anything like that before. This meant the challenge of learning and creating something new. Although this was novel, the experience was not. I was aware of the pleasant and not so pleasant experiences that others around me had. Most of these occurrences were connected to tin mining. So, while I had the experience which was authentic and lived, I did not have the privilege to reveal our story like the Niger Delta people who had similar experiences did in their literature. However, coming to Salford gave me the opportunity to 'see' the potential in my lived experience. Salford became my 'Aha' place, the place of epiphany, of discovery and limitless possibilities.

This possibility has become crucial since we do not have a collective body of work that tells our story. The creative pieces are not all the stories, but the beginning of the story. It is hoped this will pave the way for many coming afterwards, to hear about this story and the

many attendant associations with tin. Perhaps, it will help to clarify misconceptions and provide the needed platform to begin telling our authentic story.

OF BLACK SAND — AGE OF INNOCENCE

HELIMA

I cannot remember if it was every Monday or Tuesday, but indeed, at 6:30 pm, the song in Hausa filled the airwaves. It went thus, "*Jibi warhaka, na yi kusa da Shendam, kai Sulmut ka yi kusa da mangu, Kai Panshak kayi kusa da Pankshin*" to herald the presentation of the TV show 'Helima'. The pleasant sound the jingle brought to ears, made lips open in smiles and hearts leap with joy.

In the drama series, men in pairs held the calabash of 'burkutu' and drank to their delight as it washed down the spicy taste on their hurting lips from the pepper soup at 'One for the road bar'. Ngo Yop was the bar owner who allowed the miners to buy on credit even though it sometimes took them weeks to pay her. With Ngo Yop, collecting pepper soup and drinks on credit was like turning the chain on a bicycle wheel in motion, no beginning, and no end. Being a shrewd businesswoman, she knew when the miners were paid and so, no m-atter how long it took, she would get her money back. She encouraged them to collect today and pay tomorrow; this method ensured she never ran out of business.

The state-wide drama series was among the best back then. I am not even sure if there was any other television drama. Once the airwaves began to drum the lyrics' echoes into our ear lobes, we (children) left our sand play and scampered for the best position in front of the television. Not many people had the luxury of a black and white television set. The only one available in our compound had an audience of about fifteen to twenty people, including adults and children. Some women who were bold enough joined to watch too. The presence of the women there was not without remarks from the men like, "Woman, who will cook the food this evening?". The one man who never wanted his wife to participate in watching the television drama was Baba Rita. He would ask "Mama Rita, what about food this evening,

that you are sitting here watching television? Please get up". Poor Mama Rita would leave to go and make food; after all, he was the husband. It was an unwritten code that women were to be found in the kitchen in the evenings**,** where they were expected to make the family dinner (*Not sure that has changed much though).*

Nevertheless, the pull that 'Helima' had on everyone, young and old, was enough to make some men pardon a late meal. After all, dinner would be ready after the show, which usually lasted for 30 minutes. Some of the other women would sneak in to watch and then run back to check their food on the fire. It seemed the women had mastered the art of multitasking so well**.**

The drama series that brought about five families together meant different things to the different people it attracted. The women, who watched, wished they could attain the financial independence the women on the show like Ngo Yop had, especially as most in the compound depended on their husbands for every naira. Perhaps watching the rich women in 'Helima' was a way of satisfying their fancy in the hope that one day they would break free economically. The romantic attention the men showered on their fellow female colleagues in the television drama caught the attention of the women who sat with us and made them long for such.

The men, like the women, had their reasons too for watching the drama series. Helima, the main character in the drama, was the tin shed supervisor. The Whiteman in charge of the mining company had given him some form of authority, which he wielded very well. Helima represented one who was rich and in charge, made orders of drinks and food and could pay. The men silently hoped to be in charge like Helima, wooing the best of women to their side, with money and influence.

As for the little ones, the sheer excitement of watching the Whiteman's magic box was enough attraction. We also secretly wished our fathers were like Helima, who called the shots. We also learned from the show 'Helima' as children that when you heard men whistle a long distance from home, 'pay day' was around the corner or had arrived. This indicated good things to come, as we would eat some special dishes for a few days. The soup mama would make after 'pay day' would have scattered pieces of meat or fish and a dash of palm oil and tomatoes to make it taste like Christmas food. It was only during Christmas that we ate rice with a lot of meat. During the 'payday' periods, the children got treats like biscuits and sweets, which only came after father received his wages from work. We also got a change of breakfast, where we had tea and bread, or kose and kamu and not hot 'kunun dawa' (hot cereal gruel) as we would have on other days. Although the loaf of bread which was also one of the 'special meals' was always never enough for us as a family, we at least got a piece big enough to dip in tea and soak the moist bread smoothly down our throats. *I still yearn for bread soaked in tea.*

Whatever the appeal, Helima meant so many things to the different audiences gathered around the small TV every week. The song heralded nostalgic memories and dreams that sometimes happened and at other times, never happened. Nevertheless, while watching the show about the lives and times of the miners of kuza on the Jos plateau, that moment made dreams become a reality.

NOTE; (*Jibi warhaka, na yi kusa da Shendam, kai Sulmut ka yi kusa da mangu, Kai Panshak kayi kusa da Pankshin*") The day after tomorrow you would be on your way near Shendam, mangu and Pankshin- it brought the different men together=tin mines).

MR. SILMUT

Mr Silmut was a good man. He had always been known to be the patient and understanding neighbour, eager to forgive, quick to listen and never kept malice. He was unlike Oga Deme; the other neighbour who held grudges from a quarrel for days and even weeks. Mr Silmut was a trader; he sold vegetables in the market. This meant he was always on the move, going to different village markets to buy cheaper goods and bring to the city. He was so patient with his customers that he would sell on credit to those who could not afford to pay on purchase and wait until the month's end to collect his money. He would never raise his voice even when the creditors refused to pay.

A gentle and friendly man was what you would call Mr Silmut. He would be the first to greet anyone he saw in the morning, showing his kola-stained teeth in a gentle smile. When the children came to get water from the tap, he helped them place their heavy metal buckets on their head. Some of the neighbours who saw his kind gestures gossiped behind his back.

"It is because he doesn't have a wife who will empty the well of patience in him, or children, who will not allow him to smell the perfume of sanity, that is why he is like this**,**'' some said.

"He is too lily-livered to even ask for the hand of any maiden in marriage**''** others would say**.**

To us, the little children, he was the perfect example of who an ideal father should be - kind, thoughtful, patient and always returning from trips with lots of 'goodies' like *kuli kuli, Poff-poff, kose and alewa.*

Mr Silmut was the kind of man you could pick out from a crowd because of the size of his head and the colour of his clothes. I am not sure I had ever seen him in a different outfit as far as I can remember. Always dressed in brown khaki shorts and matching top, which was the fashion trend in those days.

In addition to being kind, he was also hardworking. He had learnt to buy fresh produce from his days with Mr Laws, the supervisor in charge of the tin mining site. Because he oversaw his master's kitchen, Mr Silmut was responsible for buying fresh vegetables to cook with for the master. This act of cooking with fresh vegetables continued even after Mr Laws returned to England. Buying and selling of vegetables became Mr Silmut's new job. When he began to sell fresh vegetables, Mr Silmut would leave the house early in the morning and return late at night. He was never at home on market days.

We lived at the Amalgamated Tin Mining quarters (*ATM* quarters). It was the official residential buildings for the tin miners who had worked in Jos, decades ago. The state government took over after the colonial miners left and sublet to some of the local people who had worked with the mining companies, like my father and Mr Silmut. The mining quarters were some miles away from the other settlements. In the years gone by, it was the elites' residential homes, a GRA (Government Reserved Area) with painted houses, a footpath made of gravel and beautifully planted shrubs on both sides of the path. Some of the houses had low fences made of a cactus plant, while some had a barbed wire to ward off wandering goats and stop them eating the plants. The quarters were well built and were the envy of the town. Because they were some distance from the city centre, it provided a haven for one to carry out any activity, far from the prying eyes of busy bodies in town.

On a bright Thursday afternoon, my friends and I came back for some lunch after a long time of play at the '*filin ball'*. There was Christy, the tall, talkative one, with beautiful

bulgy eyes**.** Then there was Juliana**,** the dark, quiet and stout one who was the mother hen, there to protect us, as she was the oldest. There was also Jummai, who was the chatterbox and the youngest. The boys, Festus and Jonah**,** were among the boys who played football. We were tired and thirsty and needed some distraction to hide our shame and defeat. Our team had just lost two-nil in the football match against the children from *Angwan Soya*. There was an unspoken rivalry with them. Our houses were finer even though theirs were closer to the heart of the city. Not too long after we got home, a shrill cry was heard in the distance.

Christy was the first to draw our attention to the noise**.** "Shhhh, shhhh can you hear that?" she whispered, moving her head towards the direction of the noise.

"Hear what?" Jummai asked, sarcastically, "Your spirit friends don come abi? You know say na your work be that" mocked Jummai. It was alleged that Christy always heard voices in her head**.**

"I do not have time for your nonsense, joor**.**" Christy hissed and ran off, her steps carrying her as fast as she could. The rest of us followed suit.

It was one of the busy market days. Most of the people in the compound had gone out. As was typical of most afternoons after school, the children had gone to play. The compound was relatively quiet, so we were surprised to hear some noise from our quarters. We were even more surprised, especially from the room we heard such noise, certainly not on a day the occupant of that room was meant to be in the market. We were shocked when we heard the noise and the sound of the struggle coming from his room. We tip toed towards the window. The lace curtain had a hole in it, through which we squeezed to watch the 'drama'. A skinny, tall and light-skinned girl of about ten years old struggled on the bed. Her voice was becoming frail from crying for a long time, I suppose.

“Please leave me alone, please and please.” came the poor girl’s repeated cries and pleas. The more she begged, the more Mr Silmut ignored her pleas as he kept pushing to have his way. To our greatest surprise, Saratu was the little girl crying. How she struggled with him is still a mystery to me as her frail body was no match for his big and sturdy build.

Mr Silmut was forcing himself on the poor girl who kicked and screamed with all her might.

“You are wasting your time crying as nobody will hear you; the compound is empty and quiet.”

Saratu continued to kick in a futile effort.

“If I were you, I would behave myself, and everything would be fine,” Threatened Mr Silmut.

We could see traces of scratches on Saratu’s face and an already swollen lip. Festus put his hand on my lips as I attempted to scream. I could not stand to watch the ‘horrific show’ that was unfolding before me. Jonah moved back slowly.

“We need to do something,” Jonah muttered.

We ran quite some distance away from Mr Silmut’s window to the main street. Fortunately, we met Madam Kose returning with Uncle Emma and Uncle Adams from the market. It was as if Saratu’s cries called them home at the same time.

“Shhhhhhh!” With our fingers to our lips, we made our neighbours, Uncle Emmanuel, Madam Kose and Uncle Adam, sneak back with us to the house.

We stood by the door with Uncle Emmanuel, while Madam Kose and Uncle Adam went to the window. By the time they got to the window, Mr Silmut had almost succeeded with his evil plan.

“Kai Silmut!” Madam Kose shouted from the window.

Immediately Mr Silmut turned his head towards the window. He quickly pulled his trousers up while adjusting the buttons on his rumpled shirt. Silmut made for the door but was met by Uncle Emmanuel, who was a retired wrestler.

By evening, Mr Silmut was tied hands and feet, waiting for Saratu's parents to come back. People from all over the neighbourhood had gathered and were waiting. It had become a communal problem. Mr Silmut was taken to the village head's palace. He could not deny the attempt, as he was caught red-handed. He buried his head in shame with eyes full of mist as if he wanted to cry. Some of the young men attempted to kick him while others warned him not to shed crocodile tears. The entire community came together and agreed that he had to leave. The police were called, and they were handling the matter. While Silmut was left to his woes, Saratu's parents were blamed for leaving her alone at home. Both father and mother had gone to the mines as usual. They had to work to feed the family.

THE HOUSE AT DIYE

Our house was a four-bedroom bungalow. It was fenced high at the sides but a bit low at the front of the house with white painted barbed wires, perhaps, to allow passers-by to see the house's beauty. The flowerbed was full of some beautiful and not so beautiful shrubs. The brownish-green hibiscus plant had beautiful light-yellow flowers and an attractive scent that sometimes drew bees. The cactus plant was not so attractive but had medicinal value. To the left was the smelly Tapioca tree, used as a remedy to ward off snakes. *Oh, how I hate snakes!* I had the choice of absorbing the offensive smell the Tapioca brought and enjoy the protection it offered against my archenemy. Or enjoy the sweet fragrance of any shrub and face the horror of seeing my worst nightmare. *Till this day, I hate snakes*!

To the right where the hibiscus stood was the cashew plant, which provided sweet and juicy fruits. I now know my sister did not know horticulture as I thought she did, otherwise who would plant such unrelated plants together. Yet our house was the envy of the neighbourhood.

Some gravels made up the frontage from the gate. There was a garage on the right side of the building. Next to the garage was the boy's quarters. The light cream balcony accentuated the dark brown paint on the outside. There were about twenty pots of flowers on the veranda. I am not sure exactly how many there were on each side, but there were more to the right than the left. Many green plants adorned the entrance to the house. There were also some red, yellow and lavender flowers. The flowers' colours were almost like the colours of the rainbow, which made our house look beautiful. It was not a bad combination after all, even though it did not make sense then.

Our house was one of the few houses with tiles on the floor and the bathroom walls. Our ceiling was painted white, and we had large bedrooms and had beds that had mattresses on them. The kitchen was big with cabinets and shelves at the upper and lower part. We had faucets that had water running to the kitchen and bathroom. We even had an overhead water heater that had both hot and cold water. Our dining area had a long rectangular table, made of Iroko wood (one of the most expensive woods in the country), and had six chairs covered in brown cloth. I remember to the left of the dining area, stood a table that had a wine canister, of scotch, whisky and brandy. Oh, how I experimented with the sometimes harsh, bland and pale taste of the different drinks. I was lucky not to fall 'head over' to its influence or else, I would have been in trouble with my sister.

There were two bedrooms on either side of the house and a bathroom in the middle. One room was for the boys and the other for me, as I was the only girl in the house. My immediate elder brother was in the other while my oldest brother was in one of the rooms in the boys' quarters. My room had a big bed, a large wardrobe, and a dressing table. The table had drawers that housed my jewellery and makeup kit. To have a room to yourself in those days was a big deal. Most of my friends would tell me how lucky I was to have a room to myself. Maria (my best friend) would always dream of when such 'luxury' would come her way.

"Perhaps when we get to heaven," was what she would say with a sigh and a deep sense of longing.

"Don't say such things," I would rebuke her sharply.

"I am sure it will happen soon," I would reassure her.

Jummai, my other friend who was always negative, would sarcastically say to Maria,

"Why would you desire what can never be yours? It would make you become a thief" was Jummai's reply using her hand to pull Maria's ears as if to warn her. Maria decided to die with her thoughts and dreams.

As young girls, our parents expected us to hide our voice and inner thoughts. People said that children who spoke where adults speak were not well-trained and brought shame and disgrace to their parents. Our small meetings were a way to help us guard against such. We chided each other and corrected one another while in our little meetings, for fear of going out to disappoint our parents.

Anyone who knew Maria's house or background would feel pity for her. She was the first girl in the family of seven children. She had four brothers and three sisters. Although she had an older brother, she was responsible for cooking for the entire family of nine. Her elder brother had dropped out of school because his parents could not afford his school fees (even at the government subsidised schools), he was learning to become a tailor. He usually took from the pieces of people's left-over materials to make clothes for his parents and siblings.

Maria sold food at the mechanic workshop close to the main road before now. After her near-rape attack from Usman, her mother stopped her from selling at the mechanic garage. She ended up selling nuts and sweets on a table in front of their house to support her parents. Her mother worked as a nanny to a wealthy businessman who was very mean and stingy. Her younger sister ran off with a man, old enough to be her father; at least she got to eat food from him, although he beats her every day. The other siblings barely had food to eat. Samson (her younger brother) had been caught stealing several times to the extent that most parents had warned their children to avoid him and his siblings.

I cannot remember how Maria became my friend, but I know she clung to me like a precious treasure. Maria lived with her parents and siblings in an uncompleted bungalow. Her

father, Mr Sabo, retired as a miner at the Makeri smelting company along Yakubu Gowon road. For all his 22 years of service to the mining company, his pension was not enough to finish the building. While he worked, the meagre change that came was barely enough to feed his family. He had learnt to drink while at the mining site. To worsen his case, he was always drunk as he squandered most of his salary on drinking. After retirement, he worked as a mechanic but with nothing to show for it. Maria's mother would come to his defence whenever anybody raised his drinking issue.

"At least it is just alcohol and not another woman," she would say.

She had resigned her fate to accepting him as a drunk rather than accepting another wife. Although they quarrelled most of the time, Maria's mother, Aduni, remained in her husband's house; she did not run away like other women. Besides, she did not have a place to go. Her uncle, whom she grew up with, warned her not to marry Maria's father, whom she met at the mine fields, but she refused. Now the stigma of a failed marriage would not allow her to go back for fear of being reminded that she was warned not to marry such a man.

Maria preferred my house in Zarmaganda to hers. She did not like her house, perhaps because of the shame her father brought to the family. Her house reminded her of the fate her mother had accepted of her life. It was like a cauldron of hopelessness that she and her siblings were boiling in. She wanted to leave the place of sad and bitter memories to another place, my house.

We could boast of tea and bread in the morning, boiled yam and egg sauce for lunch and tuwo for dinner. Not for Maria and her family. Her family ate once a day, only in the evenings. In the mornings, leftover from the previous night was warmed and shared among the children. Sometimes, the leftover was so small that Maria or her mother never got. Afternoons were characterised by empty stomachs filled with hunger. Lunch was never

considered, as it was not available. The boys went to either play football or accompanied Mum and Dad to the farm on some days. The girls went to plait each other's hair, and to grind corn for the evening meal. Sometimes they went to the stream to wash clothes, take a bath and get vegetables from the fadama plantation. There was no television for the evening entertainment for them as I had.

I did not do such chores, but I sometimes accompanied Maria, and to me, it was fun, but not for her. She would tell me how lucky I was to have tap water in my house or even afford the luxury of a three-square meal. When she mentioned such privileges, I sat back to ponder and see how lucky I was. What Maria said made me love my house even more. I felt ashamed to think I was hoping we would move to the more affluent areas of Rayfield or Millionaires quarters. I realized I was not thankful and felt my house was not good enough until I met Maria.

NANA'S KITCHEN

What made Nana's kitchen unique was not the log of wood that stood as the door or a combination of the long and short dry straw that adorned the ceiling and served as the roof. It was the warmth not from the hearth but the heart. It was the laughter not of having conquered wood in a fire but of a heart of gratitude for the delicious meals cooked with love. Yes, there was pepper and okra, pounded with *dadawa* and cray fish, but that was not all! While Nana cooked, she would call us to watch how she made meals; she taught us how to cook.

"Catherine, please peel these Maggi seasoning cubes," Nana would ask kindly.

"Rebecca, pound the pepper, but please be careful with your eyes," she would say in her usual loving and gentle way.

Nana would go through the steps, of teaching us how to make her signature groundnut soup; "Pour palm oil into a clean, dry pot."

"Hanna could you kindly hand me the chopped tomatoes and pepper," Nana would say with a smile, revealing her almost brown dentition. She always used one magic word or the other.

"I am taking my time to teach you how to cook so that you can win your husband's heart," she would laugh and smile. During such 'culinary lessons', she told us the story of how grandpa 'fell' for her because of her ability to cook.

The dark soot on the wall revealed many years of trapped smoke from the smell of pleasant cooking. Almost of equal proportion, three enormous rocks formed a semi-circle to make the hearth for where the fire was made. The stones served as support for the pots of clay that rested on them. There is usually a small pot for Nana, Lucky, Ladi and I.

Occasionally auntie Kach (my father's niece) strolled in drunkenly around supper time, to announce her presence. She resorted to drinking when the gossip became unbearable. Not many knew her story at the mines. Most people jumped to conclusions because she had two daughters from different fathers when she worked at the mines. Because of the rumours, no one wanted to marry her.

Not even the sweet aroma from the freshly made soup could describe the aura of Nana's kitchen. There was some space behind the door, and on the bare floor, we children sat to eat and listen to Kurkhuzhi. This was often after Nana's Saturday night special which was garnished with the leftover bones Mallam Inusa brought from the market. Traders from Bauchi, Gombe, Kaduna, and Jos looked forward to the last Saturday of every month; when they made the most significant sales, most workers, mostly the miners, were paid on the last Friday of the month. There was a lot to buy and a lot to spend. Traders brought the best of their produce; miners came with a month's worth. There was enough to eat and drink. Beyond the money and food, was the love, joy and laughter found only in one place, Nana's kitchen, the best place to be.

MY FATHER'S LANTERN

My father had a red rechargeable lantern that also doubled as a transistor radio. My older sister had sent it to him as a Christmas present. Anybody who came to greet him during the festive period was in trouble. If you were in a hurry, my father was the last person you greeted in that period. He would sit you down and ask any of us, the children**,** to serve you with a drink. To the innocent person who just popped by to say hello, my father would ask any of the children to bring his new bride for his visitor. You would wonder why he would have a young bride at his age. However, to the amazement of many, it was his red rechargeable lantern.

Father loved his red lantern so much. He was so proud that he wanted the entire village to know he had the 'latest bride' in town. One evening after he had gotten the rechargeable lantern, there was no electricity in the village. My father decided to help brighten the entire village. He put on his lantern and went around the village, from street to street, and as he passed by, people came out to see the bright wonder. Some were amazed and exclaimed that he, father, "carried electricity by hand". Children followed him and giggled along, while the older men said in amazement, "Indeed wonders shall never end" and "how is it possible to carry electricity around?"

My father was enjoying the popularity and fame that came with the lantern. Other parents began to wish they had children in the city who could make them as popular as my father. He would gather his contemporaries in the evenings and tell them what was happening in the world. Even those with small transistor radios before now believed my father's radio

had better and more current news than theirs (thinking back now, I laugh very much). Gradually our house became an attraction for both the young and the old.

Father went everywhere with the lantern: the bedroom, the market, the village square and even the toilet. It was his new-found love. Not even mother got the attention the lantern was getting. He would wake up in the night to feel it close to the edge of his bed. Mother said the red lantern was sometimes in the middle of the bed. It became mama's rival. In the mornings, while taking his bath, he would cuddle his love to the bathroom. While having breakfast; he would place it next to him and begin the day's news. They became inseparable. We all knew at this point that we had lost our father's love and attention.

Father liked going for the retired miners' meeting, which was once every month. Precisely on the last Saturday of every month. The meeting usually lasted from morning until evening. It was father's turn to chair the meeting for that month. He would oversee the meeting, and as such, he would have no time for his pet. Reluctantly, he left it at home. Alas, a window of opportunity presented itself to us. We got together, including our mother, and decided what to do to restore some sanity to the old soldier. We took the pet-lantern to our neighbour's house and hid it there.

"Where is my precious lantern?" Papa asked as he got back from the meeting later that evening.

One after the other, we left the house, some pretended to go and visit friends, and others went to buy things we did not need at that time just to run away from home.

"If it were during my days in the army barracks, (he was in the army before he became a miner) you all would have been in the guard room," father threatened. "Where are all these children? Daniel, John, Ladi and Nenrot," he called, as the wind carried his voice through the empty house.

We all agreed to come back late in the evening. There was no light as usual in the village, and everywhere was dark. We could barely see our way through. After all the shouting and raging, poor dad sat like a dog that had lost its master. He combed the entire house looking for it.

When mother served dinner, although hungry, father barely ate his food. He suddenly withdrew to his shell. We gradually returned from our hiding to meet an unhappy man. We realized his fondness for the lantern was deep.

"I don't know if the world will end today," he lamented**.** "There is nothing to tell me what is going on in the world."

To worsen the situation, one neighbour after the other came to our house with the hope of sitting round the lantern and listening to news about faraway lands. Initially, we thought the problem was a personal obsession for my father. We wanted him back to his senses, at least to teach him a lesson. However, we discovered that other people had become disciples of the lantern, especially older men. When we saw the number of people, mostly the aged, we knew so many other people needed it. It served both a personal and a collective desire.

The lantern went beyond providing electricity or serving as a source of news. It provided an opportunity for my father and his friends to meet and discuss what went on globally and just generally bond together. It was like a magnet, the bond of love and friendship that helped cheer my father and others. We felt terrible at how our little prank brought sadness to the people.

As the men came into the house, they kept asking, "Old soldier, where di Oyinbo magic box?"

"Abeg make we hear whether Ronald Reagan don die abi Magret Thatcher still dey alive."

There were several other questions as to the whereabouts of the precious lantern. At this point, we knew for sure that the lantern had to appear. John ran to Nelson's house and came through the backdoor as Nenrot was waiting by the window. She tucked it safely where it was initially and even switched it on.

After a few minutes of almost complete silence, someone suddenly exclaimed!

"Old soldier, wetin I dey see so?" It was Mr Ojo, a retired soldier and miner, "No be light I dey see so?" Pointing towards the bedroom.

All heads turned towards the bedroom window. From an opening in the window, they could see the rays of light. Papa was the first to lift his feeble hands and jump in excitement as he headed towards the room.

"Hello, my lost friend," Papa smiled as he clung to the red lantern. "I promise never to leave you again. Come rain or shine we will always be together."

Hearty cheers and claps from his friends filled the atmosphere.

"Whoever did this shall surely answer for it, but for today, let us rejoice at what was lost but is now found," Father said. Father immediately tuned to the BBC Hausa session for the late-evening news.

"Ga fasara labarai na dare a sashen Hausa na BBC" (this is the evening news on the Hausa version of BBC World News).

As if in answer to prayer, there was some musical interlude after the news on the radio. Everyone got up and began to dance and sing.

"Come and see European wonder, come and see American wonder**,**" filled the air as hands and voices lifted in jubilation for the return of the red lantern.

Although we knew there would be punishment for this prank the next day, we decided to rejoice at the moment and forget about tomorrow's woes.

SATURDAY MORNINGS

Saturday mornings were for kamu da kosai
The one made by Maman Jummai was sweetest
I put on my flip flops in excitement
Jumping up and down the narrow corridor behind Zainab's house
Oblivious of the stench from the gutter
Of mixed baby bathwater and remnants of spoilt Kuka soup
Or baby poop washed in the middle of the house as is the custom
Of residents of face-me-I-face you or
Of the bathwater from Sefi who was becoming a woman

Other footpaths led to Dogon Karfe yet,
The filthy path seemed the most appropriate for my jumping skills
It was shorter and had a concrete pavement that made
A tip, tap, a tap, tap, behind my back
Countless times I almost fell into the rubble puddle
Other times I shed tears because of the money
That had fallen off my hands
Yet, it was always a delight for me
To follow the narrow and dirty path

As I galloped up and down, on my way back
I saw things not seeming for a seven-year-old
Acts that kept my lips sealed until now
Saturday mornings reminded me of two things
Father's return, from the mines and
Hot steaming Kamu da kose

BLACK SAND

B- Black for the colour that you are

L- Lovely to behold

A-Among few and not many you dwell

C- Clean only after several washings

K- kuza is the name

S- Searched desperately to be found

A-Available to a few, as you are hard to find

N- Not a friend to us,only the rich folks

D- Dug deep in pain and sweat

TRAMPLE ON KUZA

We trampled on kuza Ignorant it was gold
It was just part of what you found on the ground
It took several seasons and months
Of many washings and
To know it was different
Looking back, I am amazed
At how close, yet so distant
We both lived and grew
Feeble limbs on rough ground
We trampled on Kuza
We both had come of age –

THE REMINDER

Mother would whistle and hum

While at your feet she stood

“Make I wash this queen comot before sun sleep.”

Mama laments under her breath

The scorching sun, already taking its toll

She uses the back of her left hand,

To clean some sweat off the wrinkles

Singing becomes the consolation

From the wrath of the sun and rain

She thinks of the children and continues

The women have become skilled in ‘curse and smile.’

Never such display of hate and love

For a tiny shiny piece

Full of power and appeal

That reminds them of their roots

WHY STOP ME?

I would never understand why
Papa would just hiss away
“Do not visit the death mines.”
The anthem was sung again and again
But the urge to go and see was strong
Mama would not say, and why
Sister would dare give me a slap
Morning, afternoon and evening
"Do not visit the death mines."
My friends and I would steal glances
With the code only we
could decipher
Disappear into the woods,
into the mines of death
I want to see what
they refuse to say
So why stop me?
No one ever gave
me an answer

RINGWORM

I remember when my teeth were yet to sprout

Mama would take me to the spot

The shrub had umbrella leaves

But spikey at the tips

I don't remember what it was called

Yet it worked wonders

When seasons of ringworms circled my skin

Its juice came to my rescue

She scratched the bark with a pebble

And said a prayer in whispers

Calling on the great one

For it was her abode

Dirty white juice trickled down

Like breast milk on a baby's jaw

From her finger to my tongue

More than once, twice or thrice

“Open your mouth wide,” mother coaxed

When I fringed from the bitter taste

“Bitter is good,” she said

Same routine for a few more days

And the rings vanished away

PONDS OF DEATH — AGE OF REALIZATION

KIM

Kim was more like a brother to me; we grew up, my family and his, together. His big sister was my best friend. I knew when he was born. We both felt the excitement at the arrival of a younger brother to play with. Her mother's breast had become too dry to be full again, with Suzan almost hitting her two-digit age. We both wanted a baby brother or sister. Kim came as an answer to our wish. At least one of us got our desires met. Oh, how we loved and adored him. Within a few full months, he was old enough to join us on the sand field to play.

As children, we always played in the sand, especially after rain. Shiny black particles usually came up whenever rain-washed the rough pebbles off the ground. My friends and I loved to play with the fine substance even though we did not know its source. My friends and I longed for the shiny sand that was very intriguing. I did not realize there was more to this shiny sand until years later.

Several years later, my 'baby brother' as I fondly called Kim left home to attend a boarding secondary school. We did not see him as often as we used to. He had grown into a handsome young boy. He was very cheerful and made everyone around him laugh. He was full of energy and light spirited. He had always been softly spoken. His white teeth accentuated his dark round face to make him look handsome. Being the last child of six, one would expect him to be a little spoilt' and lazy, but Kim was the opposite. He was smart, kind, and hardworking.

His mother said he came as a consolation, as she had given birth to five girls before he was born. She was the topic of gossip each time she went to the hospital to have a baby. He

was his mother's miracle; he was 'our' adorable baby brother. Kim grew to be the joy of everyone around him. We all had hopes that he would make a fine man someday.

One bright Sunday morning; the sun was up early and spread widely, a 'sun-day' indeed. The boys from Kim's school were expected to wear an 'all-white' uniform for morning assembly. Kim was one of such students that were dressed in all white that morning. He walked and talked as pious as his appearance that Sunday morning. He had been baptized the previous week, so he was still in a holy mood.

Story has it that Kim, neatly dressed in his white shirt and matching trousers, was on his way home that Sunday morning when his friends beckoned to join them in the pond. It was customary to see children play in those ponds, oblivious of any danger. There were no fences to ward these curious youngsters away. Some of the boys say he was a bit hesitant initially, but the tempting offer of jumping for a swim got the better part of him.

Moments after the friends succeeded in convincing him to join them, Kim began to struggle to get out of the pond. During the mining era, the deep holes dug had a 'pull' that many who fell into some deep parts, naturally sank. Even the best swimmers would be no match for the ponds' pull. Poor young Kim was no great swimmer, and like many others who had gone into such 'wrong' parts of the ponds, he was swallowed up when he tried to catch a quick swim with his friends.

I remember, while at his funeral, tears of pain and regret rolled down my cheeks. I was sad that I would not get to see him grow and fulfil the dreams he had. If only the school had put barricades around the so many tin-ponds near the school. If only there never were any such natural mineral ever discovered, my dear Kim would probably have been alive.

The realization that the black sand I liked to see after the rains were from this natural resource made it more painful. Little did I know that my childhood fancy black sand was the sand of death.

LOVE IN AMPA

We lived as neighbours in the village of Ampa. A concrete fence separated both houses. Henry lived with his older sister, just like me. I had lived with my sister since I was six. My parents sent me to live with my sister as custom demanded when she got married. I was their wedding gift, to help her clean the house, wash plates go on errands and bring her luck with childbearing. Henry was five years older than me. He lived in the boys' quarters of his sister's house where the door overlooked my bedroom window. It was common to have teenage boys live in the quarters behind the main bungalows when we were growing up. However, young girls could not have 'separate' lodges to house their friends or host mini parties like the young men often did.

We started as friends when we were much younger. We played football, drove pretend cars using old motorbike tyres and built houses made from clay mud. We swam in the shallow part of the little lakes together; we were never allowed to go beyond the *mark* for fear of drowning. We moved on from being play friends to a more serious relationship as we became teenagers. We spent time together every day. I would seize the slightest opportunity to go on errands just to peep through his door to see him. He also had a habit of coming to our house every morning or evening to look for my older brother, Alex, who also lived with us, but it was all in pretence to see me. The gate to our house was made of iron rods that were painted black and white. The gate was most times locked because we had about five dogs. One time the gate was left open, and one of the dogs, Bobbie- the brown-haired one, ran out and bit an older man passing by the street. Although I came to his rescue, the man poured insults on me. My brother took him to the local dispensary and paid for his medical treatment.

Henry later devised a way of coming into our house without upsetting the dogs. At a point, they got used to his coming that they would wag their tails as a sign of welcome.

I was beginning to experience what Maria read in the *pacesetters* romance bestseller series about heart flip-flops and butterfly feelings in the stomach. Maria had explained that it meant one was in love. I could barely sleep without dreaming of seeing his face or having a feel of his hand. We held hands almost all the time, although we were careful not to do it where eyes would create words for mouths to feed itchy ears. We kept our love affair away from our parents and his sister, but it was not for long.

On Thursday evening, my sister had gone to work; she worked the night shift at the general hospital where she was a matron. My brother was responsible for my little niece and I on such nights and of course the dogs were always on guard. My uncle was a salesman who seldom stayed at home. He was always travelling from one state to another marketing the latest snake venom from his company Pfizer. The area where we lived was prone to snakes, so there was a dire need for any vaccine or medication to alleviate the people's suffering. Uncle Mike was well paid for these travels. That explains why we could afford to live in a four-bedroom bungalow with a gate, dogs and two cars. That Thursday evening, we had the house to ourselves as both auntie and uncle were away. It was a perfect time to visit Henry.

The moment I entered his room, we turned off the light and began exploring the route, our hearts and hands were taking us. His body felt warm against mine. We had our first kiss that evening. His lips were so soft and succulent; it made my body melt and surrender to his caressing. It was going to be my first time. I was only sixteen, but I had dreamt and longed for such a time as this, especially with Henry. After all, he was my first love. He unbuttoned my brown-flowery blouse, enveloped my budding breasts into his hands and caressed gently.

I was glad it was dark as I did not want him to notice that I was shy, although I enjoyed every action. We were about to hit the clouds of pleasure when we heard,

"Henry, Henry, where are you?". It was Mrs Dada, his elder sister.

"I am here, one minute," Henry muttered while letting go of my lips

He immediately switched on the lights and got hold of a t-shirt by the cloth hanger and wiped his sweaty face. He pretended to yawn as he slightly opened the wooden door.

"I was wondering what you were doing as I did not see you come for your food."

With another yawn, Henry told her he was coming for his food as he had fallen asleep.

He motioned to me to keep quiet and lie still. That was a close shave.

On Saturday morning, I was at the village pharmacy when Mrs Dada walked in. I was nervous and began to stammer while making my order.

"Hello Victoria, how are you, and how is your sister?"

"Fine ma," I said as I hurriedly paid the cashier at the counter and made for the door.

"Not so fast, my dear, could I have a word with you?" Mrs Dada said.

I wanted the ground to open and swallow me. I kept thinking about that Thursday evening. I had jumped the fence into my house to avoid being seen by Mrs Dada. However, I was not convinced I got away with it, as I saw what seemed like a figure by the lace curtain in their main house. A warm and gentle touch on my shoulder brought me back.

"I know you two like each other," she said with a smile.

"Don't worry; I like you. You are a good girl. I will see what I can do." She squeezed my left hand and waved goodbye to me.

I was relieved she had gone but worried that she would think of me as a bad girl. But she had called me a good girl; besides, we had not done anything yet.

My father lived very far from where we were; he was about three hours' drive on *Bolekeeja* from us. My father hardly came to see us; he was busy with his farm work and did not visit often. Besides age was no longer on his side, the doctor advised him to rest more. Therefore, it was surprising when I saw him that Saturday morning.

"Papa, papa, welcome oooo," I ran towards him and gave him a tight hug.

"How are you, my dear?" he asked, looking at me intently.

"I am fine o, how's mama and Godwin?" I asked.

"Everyone is fine o." father replied.

I took his small woven bag into the house and gave him water to drink as is customary. Father and my sister were involved in a long conversation when he came until it was time for lunch. They continued even after lunch. I observed, he looked at me with pity, and they kept hushed tones whenever I came around.

Father stayed for two days and was about to leave on Monday morning when he and my elder sister called me to a meeting.

"What is this, I hear you are doing in this place?" He said, looking intently at me.

I was confused and taken aback.

"Tomorrow morning, we leave for kadung, because this abomination will not be allowed to thrive!"

"You cannot be seen to have any feelings or relationship with the son of Bulama. He is a traitor; his grandfather is the reason we have been in pain."

I was still wondering what he meant when my sister spoke up.

"Do you know we have lost over ten boys in this village to the safari dam?" she asked

"Do you know the history behind the dam?"

Then as if using her mouth to direct me pushed her chin forward and told me to ask details before falling in love blindly.

I just buried my face in my hands and began to cry. It was all making sense now.

"Mrs Dada had spoken to me; she wanted you betrothed to her brother."

My heart skipped even faster. It was common for young girls to be betrothed in marriage in their teenage years.

"But we cannot, because of the family they come from."

Father said, as if biting his finger,

"Posterity will not forgive us, the souls of those who perished in the dams will come for us because Bulama allowed strange practices of hole drilling."

"Besides, we have made a decision and so shall it remain. No one can change it, not even the foolishness of a teenager."

HIS NAME WAS JOSHUA

It was the usual evening errand. The sun was settling down for the night so that I could see the brown pebbles on the rough road. I hopped as always, looking left and right as Mrs Adams taught us in primary 4B. The class was not the largest class, but we were the best (at least by our standards and assessment). Most of the pupils in my class were neat and beautiful. We were also brilliant. There was Stephen alias the mathematical brain, and Henry, the smooth operator whose English was impeccable. We also had some of the best athletes in the school from my class.

In her cheerful and sensational voice, Mrs Adams would ask the class,

"What should you do before you cross the road?"

In a chorus displaying our incomplete teeth, we would shout,

"Look left and right and left again."

That evening, I looked left and right and left again as I crossed the main road leading to Dogon Karfe.

The queue at Maman Jummai's kose place was long as expected of a Friday evening with many people returning from work. A quick snack like *kose* always came to the rescue. I was not lucky today as no one allowed me to the front as usual. I guess most people were hungry. I patiently waited on the long queue that had workers from the mines, railways and construction sites. I was perhaps the only small child there.

The foul smell from sweaty faces and armpits did not help with the long wait. To pass the time, I eavesdropped on the gossip from the men on the queue. They gossiped about some of the ladies they claimed were free-for-all at the mines. Like Michael and Dung, some of the men shamelessly talked about their escapades from the previous week. They talked excitedly rubbing both palms, and smacking their lips, awaiting their newest catch for the evening as it was weekend already. I pretended I did not hear a thing. But I did.

Armed with the steaming kose, I hopped back. Dinner depended on what was in my hand. It was the last Friday of the month when the tin shed workers were usually paid. We had hoped for our father to be paid. It was such a great relief when he came in with a smile on his face. It was becoming dark already. Night crept in silently but quickly. I could see the light bulbs in front of houses, signalling it was night-time. I had not moved very far when I heard a voice in the dark.

"Lucy, come here!" it was Joshua.

"Yes, Uncle Joshua," I replied. I crossed over and went to meet him by the overhead tank.

"Uncle, what are you doing here?" I asked innocently.

Uncle Joshua had been brought from his village to help sell drinks at his uncle's bar. I expected him to be at the bar and not outside mostly that this was peak hour, a lot of people had returned from work. I walked cautiously as I got close to him. He could tell by my snail-like steps that I was afraid of the dark.

"Don't worry, I just want to show you something, am your uncle Joshua now," he said fondly. He had always liked me, offering me sweets and biscuits. One time he even asked me to sit on his laps when I went to collect my change from him at the bar. He brought out his hand from the shadows and gently pulled me to his side, the stench from under the tank was so pungent it almost pulled me back. It was a make-shift toilet for people who drank at the bar.

I felt his hand move from my legs to my thigh. I shuddered and moved my leg.

"Shhhhh, don't worry," he said.

"I promise to be gentle; I just want to see if the place is ripe enough for my surprise."

He pulled me to his embrace, and the stench from his armpit almost threw me off balance. He lowered his head towards my face and his breath smelt of rotten garlic and egg. He glued his lips to mine, but I struggled to resist and move back. This time, he moved his hand, past my thigh and was heading for my honey pot. I jerked backwards. Again, he pulled me closer to him and with his hands on my lips, motioned me to be quiet or else; he made a sign as if to slice my throat.

Mr Patrick was a drunk. Everyone knew him as such. How he could get himself a wife was a mystery; many have been unable to solve. Some say perhaps it was because of the free drinks he was accustomed to buying especially for girls. He was a kuza washer-boy, the miners would bring raw produce for him to wash for them. He was good at his job, except that he was always drunk. Mrs Komo, the wife of the owner of the bar downstairs, believed his blood and alcohol were enemies that did not mix. The moment he sits down at the bar, Mr Patrick would begin to misbehave and say jargon on his first bottle.

Although he was a nice, generous and kind man, Mr Patrick's constant drunken state brought him more enemies than friends. He also seemed to have offended his bladder as he always had to reduce some liquid tension. The Idaka tavern where Joshua worked did not have a toilet, which was why the overhead tank outside always came to the rescue. It was on one of such moments of relieve that Patrick met us,

"Please, uncle, is paining me," I cried.

"Shhhhh, I promise to be gentle; I just want to check how deep."

As I attempted to scream, he covered my mouth with his left hand and held my hands between his legs. He was forcing his right hand in when Mr Patrick jumped in.

"Joshua, na wetin you dey do here? who be the poor pikin wey you wan break?"

The moment I saw Mr Patrick, I bit Uncle Joshua and ran towards the light to his embrace. I broke down and sobbed, salty tears and catarrh streamed down my face.

"Don't worry; I will take you home. Shame on you Joshua," Mr Patrick said. "If you want to eat a frog, eat better one na, haba, chop the one wey don ripe." Patrick hissed as he held my hand gently towards home.

By this time, my kose had become cold. I heard my sister's voice in the distance, calling my name. I couldn't answer because I was crying. Patrick brought me closer home and handed me over to my sister.

TO KASA FOR KUZA

You drew global attention to the sleepy town

Many travelled far and near to meet the black queen

Who made young and old, men and women

Bend their backs as they scavenge for her

Your worth was explored for decades

Across many oceans and seas

With despair and hope along the way

The world came to Kasa for Kuza

You brought succour to your nation

But misery to your land

As the young fell into discovery holes

That soon swallowed babies and old alike

Oyinbo was on a discovery spree

He could not see your other side

All he wanted was the tin

You were the raw material in Kasa

Kuza, kuza, kuza, they dug you up

At your appearance was the disappearance

And the death of the bare ground

That the children could play on and

Grass and green could grow

Your pull was so strong that

You left a pool of tears

GLITZ AND GLAMOUR

By the shine and shimmer

You will know

It lures both

Men and Women

Young and old

To its captivating embrace

For miles, they walked

In the rain and the shine

Backs bent, and knees bow

In search of this treasure

So dear and deadly

Behind the shine and glitter

Holes fill the ground

Sweat covers the face

Then aches that linger

With hurt untold

Who would speak for those?

Who laboured and died?

Man, beast, grass and land

All caught in a web

That words cannot utter

OF SCARS AND GULLIES

The expedition started with excitement

From England with pride

The dusty and bumpy ride

Was not enough to dissuade

Laws and his kinsman

Orders had come from afar

Bring back the metal that matter

To the ground came the search

Of digging wide and deep

Hands were forced to move

Not to rescue but to plunder

Deep gullies are the scars left

Of the once beautiful plain

PLATEAU THE BEAUTIFUL

You are beautiful

Your flowers alluring

Your cactus enticing

But

Your beauty became your doom

You were well endowed

With the richness of the earth and her produce

Little wonder you attracted the rapists

That began to defile and devour your sanity

Your black soil with her beauty

Became washed away

In its place were death traps

Your children longed to swim but

To death, they were embraced

With all plundered

You are left empty

Blessed with hollows waiting

To consume your children

Why were you so richly endowed?

Your blessing became your undressing

IF ONLY

If only your cactus were poison

The miner would have some portion

If only your carrot and cucumber

Were cursed,

Their belly would have been consumed

If only your tin were death treasure

Their death would have been a pleasure

THE LEGACY—AFTERMATH OF DOOM

ASABAR MY FATHER'S DAUGHTER

One Thursday evening, my sister and I got a message from the village that our father was sick. The message got us worried and sad because we were the only two children father had left. Mother had died when I was five, so my sister took me to live with her in the city when she married. My sister barely ate her dinner that night. She was his first daughter, and they were very close. I was told my father was very excited when she was born, and he named her *Asabar nawa* (meaning my own). Mother had two boys who died before Asabar was born. It was said they both possessed the '*ogbanje*' (reincarnation) spirit. '*Ogbanje*' children are believed to be very active in the spirit world and very mean to their earthly mothers. They come and go; some stay for one season or a full moon; others never allowed their mother's tears to dry or the womb rest. My sister, however, had clear eyes, of one who would stay. As father rightly thought several years later, he was not wrong.

Father loved her from the day she was born (*until his dying days*). There was never any decision he took without her approval. She also loved him. She also would ask his opinion before she took any decision. She was also very fond of him. The news about his sickness made her very sad. She reclined to her room that Thursday evening not having dinner. We later heard the gentle sobs coming through her door. The next day was a Friday; she hurriedly went to the office to take permission to go to the village to see our ailing father. She said she would return that evening or the following morning. It was a two-hour drive from where we lived. Knowing my sister, she would stay with him until the next day. I was saddled with the responsibility of taking care of the house in her absence. I was the oldest

girl in the house. She left me in charge of nieces; Miriam, who was nine and Blessing who was eleven. I was only sixteen.

"Make lunch for the girls and ensure you tuck them into bed nicely." My sister said to me that afternoon after returning from the office (she worked as an accountant in a bank). I later got to hear she barely concentrated at work as she was crying all through. Her eyes became bloodshot, and her boss asked her to take the afternoon off. On her way home to see father, she bought things like milk, beverage, multivitamin supplements, rice, potatoes, cereal, meat and eggs for him.

"Make sure everything is properly arranged in the car," she instructed in that very familiar tone much like our father. He was known as 'commando' because he liked to give instructions. We would joke that father could command you to walk, jump and eat at the same time. I got everything into the car, and she drove off in a frenzy, praying silently in her heart, hoping that nothing terrible would happen to father. We knew she barely slept the night before, so I was worried she might struggle to drive.

Nevertheless, the fact that father was involved was enough to keep hope alive and help her stay awake. I went back to the house after seeing my sister off. I settled down to the business of taking care of my nieces as instructed by my big sister. I knew I had to do a good job or be in trouble with her when she returned.

About an hour after my sister left, my friend Mary came to see me. Mary begged me to accompany her to town. It was the last Friday of the month, and her father had received his salary for the month. Her father asked her to do a month's shopping for the house. She had become the mother of the house at an early age. Her mother had drowned in a deep pond by the road on her way back from a visit to their father who worked as a mining supervisor in Kura. Sadly, all the passengers in the car drowned as the car was swallowed up. Life became

difficult, and Mary had to step into her mother's shoes. It was not an easy task for a girl of sixteen. Her friends began to treat her with a lot more patience and understanding. Knowing her situation, I decided to give in when she came to beg me that Friday afternoon to accompany her for shopping.

"I am supposed to take care of these girls fa," I said pleading with her.

"I promise you we will not stay long," she begged.

I reluctantly followed her to the market. We got what was on her list, rice, tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, bathroom slippers, and a carton of biscuits, milk and sugar. We got a wheelbarrow to help with the bag of rice and potatoes and some tubers of yam. We bought many things from the market and hurriedly took a bus back. On our way home, we noticed a traffic jam around the railway crossing at Dogon Karfe. Everyone on the bus began to talk in disjointed tones,

"What is happening here o!" someone said.

"Abeg, I have an important meeting I cannot miss o," cried another.

"I think a big truck had fallen down and blocked the road," one heavily bearded man at the back said.

No one knew what had happened. Many heads turned left and right, thoughts and minds wondering what the problem was. Suddenly, we noticed cars began to turn in the opposite direction, and we saw people running, others holding sticks. They were chanting in the Hausa language:

"An fara, an fara," one man said.

"Juya ku koma baya," a man in a light pink shirt, motioned with his hand for us to go back

They were telling us to go back that there was fighting ahead. Our bus driver turned the bus and sped back to town. My heart began to beat faster; I could hear my chest in my ears. What was I to do now? Most of the roads were blocked so I could not go home. There were police sirens in the distance. I buried my head in my hands, and hot tears began to gush down my cheeks.

"What will I tell my sister?" I sobbed into my palms.

"Everything will be alright," Mary brought her hands to my shoulder to comfort me.

Suddenly, we heard a loud blast and then another. It was a bomb blast. The siren was coming close. I froze in my tracks and cried my heart out. Thoughts began to flood my mind; What if they run for fear of the bomb blast? Then they run into another danger? What if a young man sees vulnerable children and lures them? A fountain of thoughts flooded my mind.

We all converged in the city centre, people, buses, and taxis. Some parts of the town were already engulfed in smoke, so it was not safe to move around. A police officer came to address us and told us there was fighting between some Christian and Muslim youths around the route we came from. Fortunately, the military brought it under control. The military personnel on the ground helped to move us to the barracks to remain there for the night. The state government immediately imposed a 'dusk to dawn' curfew. That night was the longest and most terrifying night of my life. Sleep evaded me; it was as if sleep belonged in planet Mars or Jupiter. I could not close my eyes; my heart was too heavy for my eyes to close. What will become of my nieces, what will my sister say. If only I had not followed Mary. I continued to cry.

Before the sun woke up from its slumber and before the cock began to crow, I tapped Mary, who had somehow fallen asleep during the night that we needed to start going.

"Going where? "Mary queried, rubbing her eyes as if also rubbing sleep away.

"Let us walk back home; I will die if I spend anymore day here," I told her.

Mary reluctantly followed me as we tiptoed over legs crossed against each other in the large hall that housed us for the night. Like us, other people were trapped while shopping or doing one business or the other in town the previous evening. There was a group, of boys and girls; I think they were a choir. They were on their way for a singing competition when their car too had to turn back. As we walked towards the main entrance to the hall, I saw a familiar face. It was my uncle's friend, Uncle Eric. He came that morning to look for his wife; she left for the market the previous day and had not returned. He heard over the radio that some people were kept at the barracks. He came with his friend, Uncle Charles, who had a car to look for his wife. I did not know his wife because he was not married then when he lived in my uncle's compound. I was just happy that at least I saw a familiar face. The wife had gone to do some shopping for their first baby as she was expectant. Mary, Uncle Eric, Uncle Charles and I combed the entire place, and luckily, we found her.

"Don't worry, girls, we will take you home," said Uncle Eric.

"The town is safe now, at least the military got it under control," Uncle Charles said.

I heaved a sigh of relief when we got to the gate of our house. Mary had dropped at the junction. Her father met us with tears in his eyes. There were no mobile phones then to call, so all he did was hope and wait. Our area was calm; it was as if nothing happened there. It was quiet, the street looked deserted, a few people folding their hands around their chest, talking in whispers.

The gate to our house was how I left it yesterday afternoon when I followed Mary to the market. I became more frightened. Does this mean the girls did not go out? I thought to myself. There must have been electricity all day. My nieces can watch television from

morning until night if there were light and food. Before I left, I made sure I cooked enough and even gave them their favourite snacks to keep them happy and excited, at least to bribe them. My sister must not know I left them and went out with Mary. I gently opened the gate and went into the compound. Our dog was by the balcony but got up as soon as it saw me, wagging its tail. I placed my finger to my lips to signal that I did not want it to bark. I was surprised when I met the main door open, I turned the handle, and it gave way.

Another surprise that greeted me was that the television was still on. I was sure it was not this morning; no television station would be open now. The girls left it on from yesterday. The screen had no programme only rain of black and white showed on the screen. I began to shiver; my hands and legs were quaking. I went to the girls' room. On the bed with legs and arms spread like a scene from a movie, my nieces laid. Their snores were almost like a call and response, with saliva drooling from their lips. They were still in their housewares. Then I got the whole picture. They were watching TV till they slept, the reason why all the lights were not turned off. I quickly and quietly went back to my room and pretended to sleep. After about ten minutes I got up and went to their room,

"Wake up sleepy heads," I said sleepily.

"Aunty good morning," said Blessing my older niece.

"What happened yesterday?" asked Miriam.

I was lost at what to say; I thought they slept off, I began to stammer

"Errrmmm, actually, it was ---erm," Before I could finish cooking what story to tell, Miriam cut me midway.

"Why didn't you wake us to change our clothes haba?" "It is not fair," she said.

I clenched my right fist and giggled; my soul felt light. They had no idea what happened.

The kind of energy I got that morning was different. I made breakfast, cleaned the house and helped the girls take their bath. I washed their clothes and even allowed them to go and play with our neighbour's children. I made lunch and made some soup for dinner.

My sister came back with the excellent news that my father was doing great and that all was well. She ate and commended me for cooking and taking care of the house and especially the girls. She said she was worried that I was not old enough to take care of the house, but she was wrong. I smiled and told her I was a big girl. With hands clasped together and knees bowed, I gave thanks as I retired to bed that night.

DARK NIGHT

On the morning I became a woman

It had rained all night

As if to wipe the land of everything good

The brown zinc rooftops were blown away

The house of clay shuddered at the sound of thunder

The dark skies refused the shine from lightening

That was a sign

Dogs barked longer than usual at spirits they had seen

Leaves of trees swayed back and forth, some fell

The brown sand had become muddy

Fathers were helpless and moody,

Mothers could only sigh

The cock pen was lifted

That was a sign

HE LURED ME

He lured me into his arms

And taught me how to kiss

He told me to spread my legs wide

That it would make me high

But one thrust and I could die

He offered me a mirror and lipstick

And gave me a sweet apple

His bed was made of foam

Better than my mother's own

He rode on a bicycle

Such I had never seen

He was tall and handsome

Not like papa who barely left the ground

He spoke the language of *gods*, *English*

What an honour to catch his fancy

What privilege to be picked

He said he loved me

He said it was for my good

But he lied to me

For I was a fool

I SWEAR I WAS A VIRGIN

Before laws came, I walked straight

My mucosa was covered with grass

My inside was tight and moist

You swore I tasted good

You brought in man and machine

In vain I rebelled for it was of no use

After several men, I began *kurukere* walk

It was not my fault you see

I was accused of being beautiful

I swear before you came, I had not known many

Some few thrusts were like a feather on the skin.

Yours was different. So hard and deep I bleed from pain

Others scratched the surface

you went deep, deeper and deeper

Till I was a cauldron of wetness.

I became open and loose

Now, no one wants me anymore

IN ANGER SHE CAME

She came cascading down

Like a mighty rushing wind

No pity for man or wild

She had to speak

No more hanky-panky

It was time to get her due

After all these years

Her venom would not stop

She ranted and poured for days

The metal drums became full

The ground became a pool

No one could come to the rescue

It had been foretold

In the myths of old

That one day

she would have a say

She took without end

Awash went the shrubs and stomps

The ground poured without stopping

Leaves swayed without rotting

It was that day of doom

That was told under the moon

WE ATE POISON

They said it was good

When we ate lambu food

It was from the fadama farms

It surely meant no harm

The vegetables were fresh

Which added beauty to flesh

Carrot, cabbage and spring onions

Chopped in gwote, we ate in rounds

We were told it was healthy

It came from the ponds at hayi

They said it was good for the body

They were even more expensive

We walked long distances to get

Yet

Years later Lami and kaneng left early

We knew we had to know why

Was it the Carrot, Cabbage or spring onions?

Maybe it too much tere, we were not sure

We were told it was from fadama

THE SIGN

The sky turned dark and gloomy

The small footpath had long grown grass

An old dead squirrel lay in the bushes

The smell swished past my nose

There was an old car along the highway

Thorns and thistle got hold of my dress

I saw the pond on the other side

In the distance was the heap

The water had become brown

Maybe children had come to play

Or some Fulani cows came to bathe

Sometimes it was the dredging machine

I loved to play by the water

Tiny fishes would swim at the top

The croaking of frogs, in call and response

After the accident, no one dared

Perhaps it was a sign to stay off

AS OYINBO COME

Na as Oyinbo come naim kasala bust

We dey our tin jeje dey farm

One early mor-mor so

Naim dem begin show face

Fest na Oga Laws, then Nico join am

Before we know wetin dey ground

Dem begin dey dig

Place wey Nanchen say make we no touch

Na di place gon, gon Oyinbo like

See me see wahala

Dem say make we comot go yonda

We neva siddon finish

Dem say make we join dey dig

Say e get one money dem dey call tax

If we no pay we no go see food chop

Like play like joke we come start

Our land no be our own again

Na visitor come be landlord

Nanchen vex come dey swallow people

Old, young and pikin

The matter still dey pain till now

TRANSLATIONS OF ‘AS OYINBO COME’

I

It was as the advent of colonialism that trouble busted

We were on our own farming

One early morning like that

They began to show their faces

First was Oga Laws, then Nico joined

Before we know what was on the ground

They began to dig

The place that Nanchen said we should not touch

Was the very place the Whiteman liked

See me see trouble

They said we should go out yonder

We had not finished sitting down

They said we should join and dig

That there was one money called tax

If we don’t pay, we will not see the food to eat

Like play like joke we had to start

Our land was not our own again

The visitor became the landlord

Nanchen vex and swallowed people

Old, young and infant

The matter still pains till now

II

It was at the advent of colonialism trouble started

We were on our own

One early morning

The colonialist began to arrive

Initially Sir Laws and then Nicholas

Shortly after that

Digging began

The sacred grove of the goddess

Was where the colonialist chose

Then trouble began

We were asked to move out of our comfort zone

We had hardly settled on the new land

We were asked to dig

Then we were told about tax

If we did not pay, we would not eat

Like a joke, we began to dig and not farm

We lost our farmlands

As the colonialist took charge

The goddess got angry and killed

Old, young and infant

The matter hurts till now

ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The work has been arranged to invite the reader to encounter the creative work first. This arrangement allows the creative work to take effect in the reader, unmediated by the conventional preamble. As the reader encounters the personal narrative, the creative stories and poems help give human agency to the background information. For an accurate narrative of tin mining, it is best amplified through lived human experiences. I have recreated some of these experiences through an autobiographical approach that allows me to evoke human consciousness.

David Mitchell explores and critiques the processes of memory recollection and re-enactment in his novel, *Cloud Atlas* (2004). A character observes how the actual story of the Titanic would have been forgotten even though it occurred. However, reconstructions of the story of the Titanic become more dominant and vivid as time goes on. Mitchell notes:

> The workings of the actual past + the virtual past may be illustrated by an event well known to collective history such as the Titanic sinking. The disaster as it occurred descends into obscurity as its eyewitnesses die off, documents perish + the ship's wreck dissolves in its Atlantic grave. Yet a virtual sinking of the Titanic, created from reworked memories, papers, hearsay, fiction – in short, belief – grows ever 'truer'. The actual past is brittle, ever-dimming + more problematic to access + reconstruct in contrast, the virtual past is malleable, ever brightening + ever more difficult to circumvent/expose as fraudulent. (p. 392).

Therefore, this interpretation highlights the importance of preserving and disseminating witness accounts and narratives based on lived experience. Mitchell's novel also offers an example of how creative writing can critique and problematize memory processes and the

public versions of historical events. In my creative writing, I attempt to echo Mitchell's concerns to capture authentic lived experiences.

Chapter one opens with complementary discourses which provides a context for the writer's journey. The chapter also contains the genre of the work, and the statement of poetics and creative context. Chapter two contains the general introduction that explains the thesis's aim and objectives and provides research questions to serve as a retrospective guide. The methodology adopted for this work is contained in chapter three. Chapter four provides the basis for placing the work in an ecocritical context. Chapter five discusses colonialism and postcolonialism in the context of one of the main themes of the thesis. Chapter six provides a context for women's autobiographical writing. Chapter seven highlights the harmful effects of tin mining and integrates creative and critical work. Chapter eight focuses on using pidgin as a postcolonial construct in addressing the issue of tin mining degradation. Chapter nine contains the general conclusion and indicates the thesis's contribution to knowledge.

CHAPTER 1 - COMPLEMENTARY DISCOURSE

1.0 WRITER'S JOURNEY

I have always loved stories. Telling them or being told one. I had secretly desired to tell my stories someday. How that was going to be achieved, I was not sure. I remember, reading the story of the discovery of petroleum in the Niger Delta in Obari Gomba's poem "Shell's Love". I knew I had a similar story like Gomba to tell, but how to tell the story was one question that gave me sleepless nights. The urge to tell my/our story kept pushing, like birth pangs. However, I was like a fly trapped in a spider's web by the demands of conventional academic writing. The insights I sought were not readily accessible via conventional critical practice. Luck finally smiled at me as I needed to change the course of my PhD journey. This new route gave me the freedom to tell my/ our collective story. I was no longer trapped. Thus, the creative practice path became the route that best captured and described my academic personality.

I had always but unconsciously delved into the world of memory recollection whenever I was unhappy or wanted a distraction from an unpleasant situation. I would often recollect and dwell on pleasant memories instead. This process of recollecting memories is what Smith and Watson (2001) describe as expressing autobiographical acts, which investigate the process of self-knowing. In other words, as I dug into memory, I began to discover my essence and my being and discovered the relevance of my childhood experiences to what I have been able to write in this thesis. The tool that came to the rescue at such times was memory, which Smith and Watson (2001) identify as the tool that conveys one's experiences from the past to the present. The stories that make up my creative non-fiction are like the building blocks of my memory recollection, which add to make my life story and provide both useful data and a means of focus for my research. Thus, with this new

opportunity to dive into the stream of creative practice, it became possible to give life to my tin mining experiences, put them into writing and explore their significance. My story starts from the pond, which brought out the curiosity in me. The pond resurfaced again as I became a teen when it swallowed up close friends. The pond in stories like 'Kim', 'The house at Diye' and poems like 'To Kasa for Kuza', '*Daylight robbery'*, '*The discovery'* and 'The *attraction*', have become the symbol I am using to enable my writing practice.

The reality of tin mining and its attendant consequences are becoming alive because I grew up oblivious of some of these things. I grew up in a tin mining community but was not aware that there were dangers associated with tin mining. I did not know that the many ponds around me were connected to tin mining. Even when I asked, I never got answers because others too did not know. My creative practice stories revolve around my childhood, tin mining, and effects on the people and the Jos Plateau's beautiful environment.

I have always been a curious child. My curiosity led me to eat a poisonous cactus plant on my mother's farm when I was about seven years old. I would always query and question why something was one way rather than another. I guess it was part of the curious mind, wanting to know so much that has made me get into trouble several times in my life.

I played on the sand a lot. It was while at play that I came across the shiny black sand. As is typical with the weather in Jos, it had rained, and in its characteristic manner, the rain washed the rough pebbles off the surface of the ground. Amidst the other elements brought to the fore by the topsoil's washing during rain, was a shiny black substance. My curious mind always comes alive once I see something new or different. I will not say I am a very observant person; not that careful or given to details, but I see new and strange things. Most times after a torrential downpour and the sweet, fresh smell of rain, I lift my feet as fast as they can carry me in search of the black substance. I get there sometimes before other

children or meet them there. We pretended to look for treasure on the ground. Sometimes we find pebbles that look like precious stones; at other times we do not see anything. I did not know what the shiny black sand was called. I came to discover it was referred to as tin. Nevertheless, bitter experiences later gave it a new name, the sand of death. The poems mentioned above, and stories are examples of how recalled childhood experiences informed my current research.

1.1 FRAMING OF THE WORK

I intend to frame the complementary discourse adopted in this study as poetics. This framing has become necessary as Robert Sheppard (2003) explains that “Poetics are the products of the process of reflection upon writings, and upon the act of writing, gathering from the past and others, speculatively casting into the future” (p.3). Also, it involves digging from the past and the material of others and using such resources to navigate into the future (Hurley, 2016). The reflective statements in my poetics suggest writerly reading, which reveals a contemplation of the past and presents a glimpse into the people's lived experiences on the Jos Plateau.

From the experiences of the lives of others and the past, we can speculate a future. These reflections stem from the unanswered questions and adventures of a young mind growing up in a town surrounded by ponds. They reveal the dramatic detour my academic pursuit had to take, the obstacle I had to overcome to get the opportunity to explore that which was hidden. It explores structure and form while drawing inspiration for my work from other writings to help navigate my way through the genre of creative nonfiction (Singer & Walker, 2013). The stories and the poems in this thesis reveal from the characters' experiences, the different facets of the effect of tin mining on a personal and collective level. As the writing unfolds, new truths are being unearthed, which will provide a platform for

future investigation into the story of tin mining on the Jos Plateau. Through these writings, I hope to be able to share a concern for history, see work through the eyes of historical accounts and experiences like those that Hurley stages in her creative work (Hurley, *Heartwood*, 2016).

To begin my statement of poetics, I need to return to early auto/biographical experiences. As a young girl, I try to negotiate the interconnections that the cool breeze from the pond brings with the contradictions that such a place represents. It reveals how the mind of a boisterous young girl, full of questions that needed answers were shoved away (because the tradition is to be seen and not to be heard). I never imagined that there could be anything scholarly about tin mining or the ponds on the Jos Plateau. In my critical research, I mostly came across writings by historians and scholars of religion like Mwangvwat (2013), Danfulani and Fwatshak (2012) chronicling the journey of the colonial masters to the region in search of tin. Other writers have looked at the economic benefit of this venture birthed at the turn of the 20th century to the Nigerian nation (Azgaku et al.,2012).

Themes like the region's religious significance and the loss of traditional religious practices have been written by Mwadkwon (2010) and Danfulani (2012). Other researchers like Wapwera et al. (2014) have looked at the climatic implication of housing around mining pits and ponds. Only recently has there been consciousness about the health implications of over five decades of exposure to chemical residue from the tin as observed by Ademola (2008) and Masok (et al., 2015). Although some of these scholars look at a few of the attendant effects of tin mining, they do so on a general level, far from personal experience.

I have attempted here to look at these issues from real life experiences, of someone who has lived in this region and seen the individual and collective effect tin mining has had on not just the people but also the land and other non-human inhabitants. I am seeking to give

agency to the land, through poems which address this devastation by speaking as if the land were human. Bringing individual lived experiences into focus gives silenced humans a voice by telling the experiences that they have encountered. Therefore, this work is not just another re-telling of the tale of colonial invasion and tin exploration but conveying the nuances of lived human and sometimes non-human experiences. In this way, the work differs from what has been previously documented. It instead employs human 'lived experiences', to give a better and broader appreciation of the complexities associated with tin mining that distorted the natural earth bed and, in some cases, human existence. It is engaging the historical, economic, and religious discourses through the experiences of people and other inhabitants.

As I decided on this strategy to offer multiple perspectives on lived experience, the narrative evolved to direct this work's generic categorisation: creative nonfiction. Since auto/biography involves one's own story, I cannot be separate from the account of tin and the ponds of my earliest perceptions, understanding and growth with the story of the sand and the pond. Putting the work into different phases and forms requires stratifying the stories like the people and inhabitants that make up their narratives. As there are the young and the old, boys and girls, men and women, animals, plants and the environment, so is the need to structure these experiences**.**

The first is the childhood stage (age of innocence). I write from the aspect of a young girl who journeys through "coming of age". This stage is the stage of innocence, of enquiry of ignorance and curiosity. That explains why the stories and poems in this section reveal childlike naivety, energy and charisma characteristic of a child growing up. It is a stage I want to know more and a period where death, the black sand and the ponds mean something different from what they were in real life. That explains why I title the first section 'the age of innocence or coming of age'. The second is the "adolescence age or age or realization" of questioning and possibly demanding answers. This stage reveals how my journey had

developd from the young, energetic and bustling mind that was oblivious of danger around her, to the mind of a grown child/ teenager who was beginning to question why she was not allowed to play with or around where she thought was her safe haven. It became my stage of begging for answers that no one was willing to give me. Thus the inclusion of the creative pieces ‘to kasa for kuza’ and ‘Kim’ among the other creative pieces reveal what I was beginning to sense.

The third stage is the stage of “maturity or realisation”, of reality. The creative pieces in this section reveal the pain and anguish I now feeel as I come to realise that the things I was warned to stay off and the places I was told not to play around begin to make sense. The painful reminders of this eureka moment is revealed in stories like ‘My father’s daughter’ and ‘As Oyinbo come’. It is a stage where I now know the truth, like seeing my true self in the mirror. Where I am a grown woman, who has beheld the mirror and even the ‘broken mirror’ to see the other side of this “narrative”, where the narratives of the past would not suffice. This stage is critical as it is the period beyond “curiosity and questioning”. It is the stage of using the power of the pen and words to negotiate a healing process and conserve the past wounds. Where literature can negotiate with human experiences and correct the inaccurate narratives of the past. This approach will be explored in detail later when I explain my stories.

1.2 GENRE OF WORK

Bricolage is a useful way of describing my collection of work as Levi-Strauss (1966) quoted in Matt Rogers (2012) notes in addressing the importance of bricolage that,

> “The theories that underlie bricolage make it far more complex than a simple, eclectic approach. The etymological foundation of bricolage comes from a traditional French

> expression which denotes craftspeople who creatively use materials left over from other projects to construct new artefacts. To fashion their bricolage projects, bricoleurs use only the tools and materials 'at-hand'. Further, it signifies approaches that examine phenomena from multiple, sometimes competing, theoretical and methodological perspectives." (p.6)

I use the Niger Delta region's example on environmental writing as my material to create and chart a new understanding of environmental writing on the Jos Plateau in this work. In this sense, what is salient and often not discussed is what I am relying upon to create new insight. There are few literary or creative works about the environment on the Jos Plateau, such as Yiro Abari's novel *In the Absence of Man* (2018). I found the novel quite insightful as it reveals how the environment replenishes itself when left untouched by harmful human activities. The novel's setting is centred around life at the tin mining area, an autobiographical recollection of the writer. He recounts fond memories of family time and living during the mining period. Abari wishes those times would come again. As good as Abari's novel is, it is not enough to reveal the different layers that underpin the environmental issue on the Jos Plateau. Thus, a need to include more experiences of the various environmental issues has become necessary. Rogers (2012) notes that the concept of bricolage employs the use of multiple theoretical and methodological perspectives. This is typical of what I have attempted in this work, where I use numerous theoretical and methodological aspects of creative writing practice.

Examples of the bricolage of poems and short stories are the collection of my autobiographical lived experiences and those of people around me. I access the lived experiences through the medium of memory. The different events that have shaped my life while growing up and that of the environment and people around me is what I have captured in these different pieces. This work is categorised as autobiographical creative non-fiction. It

is non-fiction because I tap material from true-life events. It is creative writing that uses memory as a narrative approach in crafting and shaping these stories. Susan Engel (1999) observes, “The mental process involved in putting a story together, especially from the past depends largely upon the creative process” (p.3). The retrieval and creative process are vital in making the story worth reading.

Although memory is essential in capturing the past, the creative process involved is also critical (Engel, 1999) They are not just inactive accounts, but truthful accounts written to arouse the reader’s sensibility to the reality of these people. It can evoke sentiments and understanding since people, events and places are involved. As Barbara Lounsberry (1990) observes, “Verifiable subject matter and exhaustive research guarantee the nonfiction side of literary nonfiction; the narrative form and structure disclose the writer’s artistry; and finally, its polished language reveals that the goal all along has been literature.”(pp 13-15). All of these features sum up elements of literature that I have incorporated into this work using my imagination to recreate these experiences.

1.3 STATEMENT OF POETICS

I remember when I thought I saw her. I sat by the edge of the moulded sand flinging my tiny legs above the body of water that reflected my shadow. The sun was shining through the rainbow rays on the light blue sky. It looked as if she smiled. I am not quite sure if I was hallucinating, but I saw her. I was in primary 'Five'. I had visited the pond several times with my friends but not on my own. Perhaps the movie I watched the night before was coming back. The lead character was a young girl who turned into a mermaid when she encountered water. She drew much attention and even made headline news. Maybe it was that thought that triggered a desire to have a mermaid experience. One of the reasons for going to the pond for me was to 'see' mammy water. I would take pebbles and throw one after the other into the muddy brown water. My eyes followed the ripples it made as if it would reveal what I was longing to see. The pond became the place of actualising my childhood fantasy. I loved the cool breeze that blew from the open water below. It became the place for contemplation and reflection on my many dreams.

I grew up with my elder sister, who was about two decades older. It was while living with her and the husband that I had my earliest encounter with the pond. We lived in a two-storey sky blue building that had a semi-detached house that served as a warehouse. Our apartment was on the top floor, which meant I always saw the pond on my way upstairs. Although I had been 'warned' many times not to go near the pond, curiosity always got the better part of me. I would climb a wooden ladder and then across the brown zinc roof to get to the pond. When it rained, the edge could be slippery, but the 'pull' for a glimpse of the water inhabitant was more potent than any slippery floor. I was the only child amid grown-ups. My desires and interest were uninteresting to them as we were worlds apart. Therefore, to understand my world, I snuck out to the pond behind our house most evenings.

I had other friends that lived in the same compound, but we never asked why the ponds were there. In our little minds, we assumed it was part of what nature deposited in its path as it moved along to create beautiful scenery and leave its imprint. I am not sure it was by design or omission, but we never spoke about tin mining. The only thing I knew was our state capital, Jos, was referred to as 'the tin city'. I did not know much about any mining activity. It was seldom mentioned in the stories on the street or songs during playtime. My older sister would gather us in the evenings after dinner with our feet clustered around the hearth, especially during the biting cold harmattan season and tell us stories of old. She said to us how girls who behaved well got the best husbands, and of how men who fought in the village wrestling and won, married the most beautiful maidens. Every story told, always had a moral lesson.

I attended a primary school where I often walked with my friends to school. One could see moulds and heaps of brownish white clay sand by my school area. My friends and I always looked forward to having opportunities to go towards the mining ponds. The spot was ideal for playing hide and seek; it also served as a corner for boys and girls to speak in whispers and talk about 'adult' things. Once we saw a boy squeezing the lips of a primary six girl in a bid to practice kissing. Such pond areas were love zones. We were told that the deep holes were there because of 'Oyinbo' people who came and dug the place decades ago.

One time I followed my older cousin to his farm, where there was a pond. I fell in love with the fresh cool breeze that sprang from the pond. The pond by his farm was used as a dam to provide water for the breweries. Interestingly, my older cousin told me the 'regular narrative'. It had nothing to do with the hardship the residents there faced or the fact that non-human inhabitants like plants, did not have a place to grow. I did not think anything negative about such a 'useful' place. It did not seem a bad thing, not until years later. I did not know that the seemingly fresh and cool breeze from the ponds and the heaps of sand had a story. A

story that will be the foundation of my peculiar narrative, not just my story but (also) our story:

*Hours after the car of the missing Major General Idris Alkali (rtd) was found on Saturday in a mining pond in Du area of Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, the recovery of the car has sent shivers down the spine of residents who are contemplating mass relocation for fear of possible military action against them. Given past antecedents of the Nigerian Army where it invaded Odi community in Rivers State and Zaki-Biam community in Benue State over alleged attacks on security personnel, there are fears by the Du residents that the army may repeat same against them. (*Guardian newspaper of October 1, 2018*)*

The symbol of the pond has continued to be associated with the land on the plateau. For me, it became the pond of death as I lost my friend's younger brother to one of such death traps. The pond became not just a physical scar but also a symbol of death. It became a death trap. Thus, while it catered for my childhood interest in anticipating the 'mammy water', it robbed me of people so close and precious to me. The pond became the thread woven into the fabric of the existence of the people. This explains why the pond has become such a powerful symbol for my creative practice. The stories and the poems presented here form a bricolage of the different symbols of the pond, tied around the different stories and life experiences in a tin-mining settlement.

The recollection of childhood experiences is what links me to the tin mining ponds. I can re-enact and bring alive the tin mining story through my own story, which is essential as it defines who I am and who we are as people (Tansley & Maftei, 2015).

1.4 CREATIVE CONTEXT

One of the significant concerns that motivated the writing of this piece is the interest in creating awareness and speaking through the experiences of silent voices and the suppressed narrative of the devastating effect of tin mining on the people and the land. By silent voices, I mean the voices of children and women who became victims of this exploration. Children were left to 'grow up' and provide and protect themselves without parental care (as revealed in the story of Mr. Silmut). Women's traditional role changed as they had to take care of their homes while also working the mines and feeding their children. Some of these women were exploited and abused at the tin mines with no one to explain their predicament. In the narrative about tin mining on the Jos Plateau, the involvement of women and their contribution is overlooked. Then in the larger Nigerian context, the Jos Plateau is often neglected in the discourse on environmental degradation in Nigeria. Thus the silent voices are victims of tin exploration which include the land, children and women. I explore this through the tool of memory recollection of my experiences as a child, a teenager and a young adult.

My thesis seeks to experiment with autobiographical practice. It presents individual narratives as historical artefacts that are not just personal but communal (Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett (2012). The connection between creative and critical, personal and collective buttresses the theoretical and historical background. Drawing from my poetics and the recollection of memories into the insights gained from my own experiences, the autobiographical stories reveal a relationship between the stories and my personal life and the communal life.

The complementary analysis provides an enquiry into the issue of home and identity. It explains how it is conveyed in the creative practice while opening a sensibility to the impact of the stories through my writings. Both the short stories and poems explore similar

thematic preoccupations; an example includes ‘To Kasa for Kuza’ and ‘Saturday Mornings’. These poems reveal human involvement in tin mining and its attendant effect on the land and people. The short stories about ‘Mr. Silmut’, ‘Helima’ and ‘Kim’, also have the same thematic preoccupation on tin mining and its effect. These short stories reveal the psychological impact of this devastation on vulnerable victims like children and women.

I was oblivious of the degradation of the environment in which I lived and grew up. The seeming unconscious account of the degraded land on the Jos Plateau is not unconnected to the ‘narrative ‘or lack of awareness of tin mining's adverse effect on the land and its inhabitants. The question of how not much has been talked about concerning the degradation on the Jos Plateau is what I hope to unravel as I journey through childhood memories, youthful escapades to the crisis bedevilling the state presently. It is interesting to discover that all the different threads reveal a common denominator, the natural mineral tin. The creative work will expound on the various effects and consequences of tin mining on both human and non-human inhabitants of the region.

My thesis is a call to provoke what Mekuria Marru (2016) refers to as the ‘unusual narrative’, the seeming silence of the story that our city is even named after. It is surprising to note that tin mining history is not taught in our schools on the Plateau. The reason for this makes me wonder if this is deliberate. Since tin was such a vital income earner whose influence was felt abroad, one would expect this to be taught in our schools, especially on the Jos Plateau. Interestingly, while on a visit to the Imperial War Museum in Manchester, I saw a photo frame where Nigeria was acknowledged for its tin which helped Britain during World War 1.

Meanwhile, I never knew why we had the ponds around my house or the school area. The closest narrative we had was Helima, a television drama series that chronicled the tin

workers' social lives. However, it did not give the sociological or psychological consequence of tin mining on the land's people. This work investigates and reveals through lived experiences, the multi-dimensional effect of this discovery, which served Nigeria and the world decades ago.

The connection between my creative recollection of lived experiences, the critical, and the general background or review gives a basis for my work and poetics' theoretical discussion. The reflective pieces reveal, through the experiences of the inhabitants of the region, their relationship with tin mining. The short stories and poems are the lifeline of this thesis. They serve as the thread through which my story is spun. They revolve around real-life experiences, of people and situations that have taken place. This work's composition and arrangement reveal the lived experiences and effects of environmental degradation on the environment and its inhabitants. Although the work is embedded with personal encounters and experiences, it is not void of a universal appeal. It draws strength from the success of the engagement with words to pursue a good cause.

Stories reveal a reality that calls out the audience and seeks to include more and more characters into the process. It is through personal stories that political appeal can be won (Hammack & Pilecki, 2011). Alistair Macintosh (2004) also used the power of personal narrative employed as a political tool. He engaged in non-violent means to stop the chemical devastation of a cement factory on his environment. This example by Macintosh resonates that the concern for the damage done to the environment and its inhabitants should be a global concern. The personal involvement and story are a powerful tool for political strategy. This has become necessary primarily because the effect of a seeming ‘harmless’ business ventures like tin mining has resulted in a catastrophic impact on land, people and non-human forms, centuries later. I believe some of the stories will help us understand our humanity and the danger our choices and decisions have on the people around us.

CHAPTER 2 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This thesis has developed because of the recollection of memories that I have captured in poems and short stories. I initially set out to work critically on the environment of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. As I journeyed along, there was the need to take a detour. A critical approach was not enough on its own, and I also needed to find a subject even closer to my own experience. This became clear as I began to explore the opportunity to engage with creative practice. Although the present work captures environmental concerns, the physical environment of study is now the Jos Plateau, the region where I grew up. It is where my memories and stories were conceived. It is my birthplace, of experiences and dreams.

These stories and poems thus serve as the entry point into my autobiographical journey. They are significant, as they create pieces that will open a new and broader perception of the discourse on tin mining in Jos Plateau. The creative recollections will also serve as the medium to unveil the silenced experiences of the region's indigenous inhabitants. It will serve as a channel to communicate the complex issues associated with the devastating effect of tin mining on the environment and its inhabitants as revealed in the stories and poems.

I have divided the work into segments to convey different themes and experiences. The themes include land degradation, women and tin mines, early death, and land loss. The work does not follow a sequential arrangement as sometimes found in conventional academic work. The work's non-linear arrangement can be likened to the uncoordinated/ illogical experiences I encountered as a first timer in the UK. I was faced with the convention of Western academic writing with which I was not familiar. At the same time in my daily life, I

dealt with laws and behaviours I did not understand. I misinterpreted acts as simple as the bus not stopping for me when I flagged it down as racially discriminatory. I was ignorant of the fact that I had to be standing at the designated bus stop to be able to get on a bus. I wanted in this thesis to convey the different/difficult experiences through my language and approach.

Although the stories explore the different stages of my life journey, they deliberately delve into different themes through the characters' experiences. They reveal the multi-faceted effects of tin mining on the various characters that make up the stories. The stories and poems expose diverse experiences that help capture the extent of the devastating consequence of mining. This creative platform enabled me to engage in practice as research and guided me on exploring, for example, the issue of the ponds in literature.

Initially, I thought the form of devastation that needed attention was the Niger Delta. Ironically, although it took me time to realise it, tin mining had had as much adverse effect in Jos, where I grew up, as the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta. Perhaps my initial ignorance was due to the Niger Delta issues' high visibility, raised by writers from the Niger Delta region through their literature. The same is not evident in the literature of the Jos Plateau. The creative pieces above are an attempt to address this and reveal the extent of the devastation that tin mining had on the people and the Jos Plateau land.

The study adopts the dual function of speaking for the land and its inhabitants. The stories presented are valuable tools that help in understanding the people and their culture. The stories of other characters and their voices are also captured to bring multiple experiences to bear in an address to a broader audience.

2.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Environmental degradation is one of the significant global issues attracting national and international debates, leading to repeated calls to protect and preserve the environment (Okuyade, 2013). Human-induced climate change is a driver of ecological crises, which triggers a cycle of negative occurrences by the adverse effects of human actions (Ojaruega, 2013). Despite warnings about the perils of global warming and the earth facing an ecological crisis, exploratory activities such as mining, gas flares and oil spills are among the factors responsible for environmental despoliation (Okuyade, 2013). Over the years, environmentalists have advocated for increasing awareness of the need to preserve the environment. One such call was the climate change summit of 2015 in Paris which drew attention to the importance of preserving the environment (Robbins, 2016). The former United States vice president Al Gore has also warned against activities that endanger human lives and affect the environment (Gore, 2013). Similarly, numerous scholars in diverse fields, such as the psychologist Hans Baer and historian Worster Orr and theologian Rowan Williams, warn of the dangers of specific human practices as these affect other humans and the environment.

A group of literary critics, including Lawrence Buell, Cheryll Glotfelty, Michael Branch, and Scott Slovic, have directly responded to the environment's continuous exploitation. These writers, referred to as ecocritics, focus on place and the environment as crucial in critical theory. Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) advocate a better relationship between humans and their environment, as there exist strong interconnections between nature and culture. They further opine that since the physical world and human culture are connected, maintaining such a bond has become necessary in contemporary literature. Therefore, it has become imperative to consider the consequences of human action in the light of what

Glotfelty and Fromm identify as “the troubling awareness that human activities are contributing to damaging the ecosystem” (p.9). One way to advocate for better treatment of the environment for the good of both human and non-human forms is the inclusion of ecocriticism in literary studies. Ecocriticism provides a platform that enables the dynamics in the environment to be better understood. This comprehension of the consequences of human actions as presented in texts will help conserve the environment from further degradation (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996).

A realisation of the fact that humans cause most of these actions (like oil exploration, tin mining and glass flaring as highlighted above) corroborates what the historian Donald Worster (1993) explains, that part of the global crisis plaguing the world in recent time is because of actions that humans have done. Therefore, one way to get out of this human-induced degradation is to begin to change the way we treat our environment and be involved in positive actions that can help make the earth a better place. In response to the degradation of the environment by human activities causing unrest in nature, recent writings are beginning to suggest how to make the environment a better place. It is a result of the degradation going on in the world today that the study of ecocriticism has emerged. While most criticisms explain human interaction with each other or other beings, ecocriticism is concerned with the remediation and preservation of the environment (Glotfelty & Fromm,1996)

2.2 FOCUS OF RESEARCH

The African environment has undergone different forms of exploitation and degradation; water pollution, burning of trees and farmlands, to the loss of pastoral beauty, and diverse health problems. This degradation has produced a growing concern that has necessitated a call for the preservation of the environment. Hence, Ojaruega (2013) observes that it is not

surprising that African writers have also taken up environmental and ecological issues in their attempts to sensitise the public about the deteriorating environment.

In Nigeria, for instance, areas such as the Niger Delta and the Jos Plateau are regions that have experienced the devastating effects of oil exploration and tin mining, respectively. Degradation due to human activities such as oil exploration and tin mining, alongside the effects of oil spillage, toxic soil and open ponds, has been going on for decades with adverse consequences on the inhabitants of such places.

The earth's surface's continuous exposure to destructive chemicals has made the soil lose its potency (Kadafa, 2012; Lovelock & Lovelock, 2000). The Jos Plateau is one region that has experienced environmental degradation and the defacing of its environment because of exposure to chemicals from the exposed soil/ ponds. Tin extracted from the Plateau grounds has exposed the inhabitants to health hazards like cancer resulting from chemical exposure. The large holes that deface the entire region have deprived the area of its naturally beautiful landscape. The Plateau region was known for its picturesque lands and mountainous surroundings, which also had beautiful soil for farming and livestock. The temperate climate was conducive and ideal for farming compared to the extreme weather in the far north. The environment was also suitable for the people; a place they identified with and called home. Most of the beautiful lands were lost to tin mining extraction. The loss of land was especially significant, given that agriculture was the mainstay of the people (Mangvwat, 2013).

Other non-human inhabitants of the region were also affected by the devastating effect of tin exploration on the land. Plants native to the area have also been lost, stripped of their natural ecosystem due to mining activities. The remaining soil became exposed to elements that have had a dangerous effect, with the portions of land where tin was mined becoming poor in nutrients compared to neighbouring areas that have not been exposed to tin.

The people around the mining regions were also exposed to radioactive particles that cause cancer, lung and kidney diseases (Etim, 2017). The mining activities carried out on the Plateau also exposed the land to various forms of degradation. These activities rendered the land agriculturally unproductive. Etim asserts that because of digging deep into the ground for access to tin, the water table has been disturbed (Etim, 2017).

Additionally, the critics Azgaku and Osuala (2015) have also observed that mining activities have destroyed the Jos Plateau environment. They argue that the search for tin ore provided a clear example of mineral exploration and exploitation of the environment. The continuous depletion of the environment has prompted the outcry against human actions that harm the environment.

Although several scholars recognise the evidence of environmental degradation due to human activities, their points of view may vary according to their various backgrounds. It is against this backdrop that the interest in this study is the utilisation of autobiographical writings to understand the consequence of tin mining on the environment of the Jos Plateau, Nigeria. This focus is essential because the Jos region has experienced decades of environmental degradation due to tin mining and has suffered a dearth of scholarly literary criticism of tin mining's effect on the environment.

Moreover, the research that has been carried out tends to focus on the physical disruption of the environment while overlooking people's sociological impact. There is very little literary work about the Plateau in this regard, either by the people themselves or outsiders. My creative autobiographical writings will address these gaps. In the form of short stories and poems, I address environmental degradation in the Plateau and advocate for the restoration and preservation of the environment.

2.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The initial aim of the research was to produce a collection of short stories and poems that explore the extent of the effect of tin mining on the Jos Plateau. This aim was achieved through

1) Exploring how creative autobiographical writing can enhance understanding of the consequences of land degradation on the physical environment of Jos Plateau, Nigeria.

2) Exploring how creative autobiographical writing can disrupt dominant narratives and enhance the understanding of silenced experiences of the inhabitants of the Jos Plateau, Nigeria.

3) Examining how the reading of autobiographical writing on tin mining engages with ecocritical and postcolonial theory.

4) Exploring ways that creative work can open new avenues for writing about tin mining and the environment on the Jos Plateau, such as the use of pidgin.

2.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions further aided the focus of the research:

1. How can creative autobiographical writing enhance an understanding of the extent of the consequence of land degradation on the Jos Plateau, Nigeria?

2. How might memory writing disrupt dominant narratives and articulate silenced experiences of land degradation on the Jos Plateau?

3. In what manner does autobiographical practice speak to eco-critical theory?

4. In what ways can creative work open new avenues for writing about tin mining and the environment on the Jos Plateau?

2.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

While there has been considerable writing on the devastation of the environment in Nigerian literature, especially in the Niger Delta, there is a scarcity of literary writing that captures the ecological destruction on the human and the non-human inhabitants of the Jos region. Therefore, in this work, I draw on the existing literature of eco-critics like Branch, Glotfelty, Slaymaker, Nixon and Byron, among others to introduce ecocritical texts or perspective in literature. Significant to this work are the parallels and inspiration it draws from the literature of the Niger Delta, which has numerous writings on ecological issues. These influences have helped to give rise to the enquiry about the literature on the Jos Plateau.

Therefore, this study attempts a portrayal of the impact of colonial activities on the environment of the Jos plateau Nigeria. The research explores the land's usefulness to the people as they depend on it for food, shelter, and a provider of income. The study also reveals how the land that meant a lot to the people was taken from them through colonial laws. I analyse the impact of the land loss through the effects of colonial activities on the environment and the human and non-human inhabitants of the region.

Much of the literature from the Plateau region has been preoccupied with the different forms of crisis that have plagued the area for over two decades now. It has become apparent during this study that, the literature from the region centred on issues of communal conflicts Gavin & Fredricksen (2012) and how tin affected housing as observed by Wapera et al., (2014). While critics like Azgaku and Osuola, (2015) emphasised the socio-economic importance of tin as a commercial product; writers such as Masok et al. (2015) focused on the

effect of chemical radiation from tin. Other writers like Higazi (2016) dwelt on land and ownership, especially from the settler Hausa- Fulani which can be traced to their migration to the Jos region because of tin mining. From the preceding research, it became clear that there were different angles of looking at the tin mining issue, but what has been mostly neglected is how human and non-human inhabitants have been affected. Other issues have dominated the Jos Plateau literature as noted yet, the question of how the land itself and the inhabitants were affected has not been projected in its literature.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This research is conceptualised within the theories of ecocriticism and postcolonialism. It also employs autobiographical theory within creative writing practice. Each of the separate approaches forms a bricolage for my critical and reflective work, contributing to my writing short stories and poems about the region I come from. The methodology adopted for this work is the practice-based approach. It will use Nelson's dynamic model for Practice as Research (Par). The model will aim to synchronise, the theoretical frameworks of ecocriticism, and postcolonialism. It will explain how the genre of auto/biography and the processes of memory writing and creative nonfiction connects with the practice-based approach adopted in this work.

There are different philosophical stands like ecocriticism, postcolonialism, structuralism, formalism and modernism. However, my interest in this research is the theories of ecocriticism, postcolonialism and feminism. My emphasis is on the physical environment and the sociological experiences of the inhabitants of the land. Through my auto/biographical writings, I connect the theories of ecocriticism and postcolonialism using memory in writing these stories and poems.

3.1 ECOCRITICISM

According to Michael Branch (1998), the emergence of eco-criticism has produced the need for ethical consideration, which demands a new approach to literary studies. This statement implies that teaching about the environment, especially in the literary text, should deliberately

include how human actions affect the globe. The critic Worster Orr (1992) cautions of the potential danger of educational institutions not adequately responding to this crisis. Orr notes that the inclusion of "ecological perspectives" in subjects taught in schools is fundamental to helping students understand "why the colour of the water in their rivers is related to their food supply" (p.85). This approach, according to Orr, has become essential to sustain generations and humanity. Branch (1998) has suggested the need to read a literary text to understand the relationship between humans and their environment.

Therefore, ecocriticism helps in the understanding of the interaction between humans and their environment. Branch agrees with Orr on the importance of ecocriticism in literary scholarship as it provides the need to move beyond personal assumptions to the realisation and need for coexistence. Branch suggests a move beyond interpreting eco-criticism as a means of analysing the environment in literature to a step toward a more environmentally oriented mindset and worldview (Branch, 1998). The critic Barry Lopez (1999) has noted that nature writing will eventually serve as a basis for the change in global thought and action. Lopez's observation has given me a route to my creative work: in writing about the nature of the Plateau, I am contributing to that basis. The change this enables will form the underlying principle for how humans behave towards their environment and life in general (Lopez, 1999). Consequently, my work will serve as a platform for reading and understanding the environmental problem on the Jos plateau. It also advocates the need to evaluate this connection and its potential as highlighted in the short stories and poems on tin mining on the Jos Plateau.

The exploration of tin on the Jos Plateau has become a potential threat to the people's existence. Issues of environmental degradation and land loss, health hazards and death are among problems plaguing the land and the inhabitants of this region. One way the problem of the land and environment can be read and even considered seriously is through its literature.

Since ecocriticism involves humans' connection to their environment, one pragmatic means of addressing the degradation associated with tin mining is through the poems and short stories I have included in this study. The poems and short stories reveal environmental degradation issues on the land and its inhabitants. They also advocate the need for eco-critical perspectives in the literature that will foster a commitment to the preservation of the human and environmental bond (Buell, 2011). One way this can be achieved is through the reading of stories that have not been told before. It also involves including such writings in the curriculum to have access to reading these silent experiences. In future, I plan to initiate this in my region on the Jos Plateau, Nigeria. The critic Worster (1993) agrees that such a determination is necessary to build a harmony that results in an environmentally conscious human community.

For the Jos Plateau inhabitants, lands for farming that existed before discovering tin have resulted in a space filled with ponds and gullies that have caused humans and animals' death. This study situates the ecological impact of the Jos plateau region's despoliation through tin mining exploration while portraying the multifaceted effect tin mining has had on the land, people, and its inhabitants. Worster (1993) has argued that "eco-criticism negotiates between the human and non-human. Since literature is the artistic representation of human activities, eco-theory helps expose and explain man, art and their relation to the natural environment" (p.27). Therefore, this study adopts the ecological literary theory. Through the short stories and poems in this study, it suggests how literary texts engage and express the complex relationships of human beings and their natural world. Through the stories and poems, we see how human life and living revolve around the environment. The food that the people depend on is from the environment; some medicinal herbs are from the environment. Plants and grooves found in the environment also serve as a source of worship with the ancestors. A more detailed explanation of this connection is discussed in chapter seven.

3.2 AUTO/BIOGRAPHY

Auto/biography serves as a medium of expression for the writer; it is like a pathway to discovering one's self. This discovery is not just for the writer but also for the reader who can interpret his or her story from the example of another. John Sturrock (2008) opines that in every individual lies the urge to tell a story about one's self and Auto/biography serves as the medium for this expression. Sturrock states that since it is the account of an individual's life story, it is a journey (backwards) into the discovery of self. This assertion is particularly true in my experience as I have gone on this journey to self-discovery. I have come to realise that the more I travelled into the pond of discovery, the more I unearth mysteries that I never knew or imagined. Unanswered things began to make sense.

One example of such is what I try to capture in the poem 'Black Sand', (in the creative writing section above), where as a child, I had a different notion about what the black sand meant. I looked forward to coming outside after a heavy downpour/ rainfall to look for the tiny black particles on the ground. I never knew where they came from. As I grew older, I was told it was from tin, and that was it. However, while engaging in this autobiographical writing, I realised that it was no ordinary sand. This realisation becomes the differential between the older, wiser self and the child I was back then who was innocent of this knowledge. The implication of this insight explains the usefulness of the opportunity creative practice provides, what Nelson describes as embodied knowledge versus reflective and conceptual expression, it would have remained undiscovered and uncommunicated, if not for the opportunity creative practice provided.

This work uses artistic creativity in bringing the different experiences I encountered while growing up into a narrative that can be read and understood. This work can be referred to as an auto/biographical account that is historically situated. Suzan Engel asserts in *Context*

is everything (1999), such memory recollection relies on lived experiences of the past as recollected by the writer/author. It is autobiographical since the individual and collective journey starts from the knowledge of history to the present. James Olney (1984) explains that: "Auto/biography may be understood as the recollective act, in which the writer, recounts past experiences and how they lead and affect the present'' (p.46). Olney's explanation captures what I am doing now in this thesis as it stems from an account of the past and how that past event affects the present. Olney further opines autobiographical writing is not "a neutral or passive recording of events but rather a creative and active shaper" which I am aware of as carrying agendas and consequences to my creative choices. Therefore, I am engaging with the tool of memory to create and shape an identity rooted in my people's experiences as a way of creating consciousness and appreciation of where we are now collectively.

The collective voice I employ here gives a broader concept of auto/biography beyond a self-centred process and opens the text to include others' voices and experiences. This process, in a way, can be termed 'group biography'. It is the biography of a landscape told through my consciousness and understood through the voices of the people who lived through the experience. This consciousness is what Henry James (qtd in Labrie,1968) sums up as "as the mind's dynamic and selective assimilation, interpretation, and evaluation of its environment and of itself at any one moment" (p. 517) Through this conscious imagination, untold or partially told narratives of tin mining and its consequences are presented. In this case, it is both a personal and collective recollection of expereinces. 'Auto' here is my personal expereince and the 'Bio' is the experiences of others that I have witnessed and have been told about. Thus, a reading of these stories will reveal the complexity of this devastation.

3.3 POSTCOLONIALISM AS CRITICAL THEORY

Postcolonialism as critical theory focuses on the aftermath of colonial activities on territories that were under its control. It pays attention to how the culture, tradition, language, and the physical landscape of such communities were affected by colonial activities (Sawant, 2011). According to John McLeod (2013), the British empire covered a vast area of the earth, including Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Caribbean. This period came on the heels of the industrial revolution (1760-1840) which helped to broaden British influence and control to regions beyond its shore. As the empire settled in the regions they conquered, they took over lands belonging to the indigenous inhabitants and exploited its resources. McLeod notes that the invasion and expansion of the colonial administration led to the discovery of opportunities for wealth creation for the British, and control of such avenues by the British empire.

Nigeria became a British protectorate on January 1, 1901 (Berry, 2008). As Britain's colony, its land and resources came under the control of the British empire as the "regions that were conquered came under the rule of such empires" (Mcleod, 2013, p.10). Tin ore was one of such natural resources found on the Jos Plateau of Nigeria. The critics Gavin & Frederickson (2012) observe that the Land Proclamation Acts of 1904 and 1910, and the Mineral Acts of 1903 passed by Lord Lugard, made the acquisition of land by the British Empire from the people for tin mining possible. This act of collecting the land brought about land devastation and the land crisis in the area. Many British miners and mining companies acquired vast land, meant for farming and religious sacrifice for the sole purpose of mining. As a result, the people's land was taken over to benefit the colonial administration.

Before the coming of the colonial masters, these lands were a source of identity, serving as a home and providing food for the region's indigenous residents. Also, McLoed

(2013) notes that in some cases, the indigenous lands were destroyed to such an extent that they were no longer useful to the indigenous inhabitants. The loss of these lands resulted in the loss of what linked the people to their ancestry. It is the aftermath of these colonial activities that I have represented and exposed in the creative pieces in this work. In this way, the work takes on a postcolonial approach.

While postcolonialism concerns itself with the aftermath of the activities of colonialism, ecocriticism highlights environmental concerns in the literature (Alia Afzal, 2016). The close connection between ecocriticism and post-colonialism can be hinged that at the very heart of the post-colonial discourse is the settlement of land (McLeod, 2013). Land or the environment cannot be isolated from humans as they are intimately connected to their environment. Therefore, the fusion of postcolonial and ecocritical will help give a better understanding of the creative pieces. Both theoretical perspectives have the issues of land and care for it at the bottom of its concerns.

Using creative practice as a methodology, the components that comprise creative practice in my work have been grouped into a framework that will help give a better understanding of the use of the creative practice methodology. The framework includes auto/biographical writing, memory writing and creative practice.

3.4 MEMORY AS NARRATIVE APPROACH

The ability to be able to write an account of one's past involves using memory. The use of memory recollection is what Susan Engel (1999) observed as the start of a journey from the first moment of the recollection of memory to the other angles of the world around them. Engel observes that a lot of scholarly discourse notes that memory engagement in recollection is not an isolated event; it is "the assemblage of processes'' (Engel, p.4). In my

work, the intricacy of the process is mirrored in the complexity of the different people's lives and the different experiences and encounters they have faced. Examples include the near-rape incidence of Saratu, washing of tin in the sun by women, to Kim's death, among other experiences captured in this work.

For many people, different images are used as a metaphor to help in remembering things stored up in the brain. For me, the image that retrieves and opens the past is the pond and the black sand. The thought of that image brings to life memories that had hitherto been buried in my memory. Also, memory both enables and complicates the auto/biographical process. Paul Auster notes in *The Invention of Solitude* (1988) "[Memory] wilfully distorts the story it is telling, changing facts to suit its whims, catering to the interests of a drama than truth." (p.124). The distortion or drama could be in some of the details the writer adds to give a better understanding while still ensuring the experience is not lost. Memory enables in the sense that it provides the recollection of an actual event. Although the journey back to memory can sometimes be discomforting and painful, the desire to present authentic experiences to fit into a context is worth the effort.

Engel refers to the categorisation of memory by researchers who have grouped memories into different categories using Endel Tulving's suggestion that humans have two kinds of consciousness: semantic and episodic (p.7). The semantic type of memory is not very specific; it is like general knowledge. An example of the broad experience in my case was that I knew Jos was regarded as "tin city". I was oblivious of any other specific detail. The episodic memory that comes to play here is the vivid recollections of growing up to see ponds around my house and my school. The later realisation of the significance of the many ponds around my city is captured in the experiences of the people around me; of deaths and sicknesses and other health hazards that are traceable to tin mining. Thus, real-life stories make episodic memories alive and real. Engel notes that as memories are transported from

the emotional abyss of our minds to the pages of work (as I have done here), different processes are involved in producing these lived experiences. Thus, we can present the exciting changes that memory undergoes as it moves from being a personal story to a general story through autobiographies.

Engel (1999) quotes Luis Bunuel who in his writing, does not absolve himself of presenting certain false memories but takes responsibility for any errors or doubts or uncertainties that his creative writing (memoir) would have elicited. I choose to adopt this line of thought as Luis Bunuel as I journey into my past to recover as much "accurate" detail as I can retrieve to make the life of my past to navigate the present. It might not be the exact representation, but it certainly will be a reproduction of experience in the past. Examples of some of the stories are shown in the creative writing section, as indicated above.

Stories and experiences seem to effectively cohere and make sense if they are expressed in real people and real lives (Engel,1999). In fiction, however, the narrative technique employed through the plot, language, and style helps make the story coherent. Hence point of view and narrative voice help this sense-making. Thus, Engel asserts that the process by which the events and experiences of the past can be relevant is when it is understood as linking the people, their experiences and their environment, hence it is eco-critical. James Baldwin explains "Perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition" (Baldwin 2010, p.2. qtd in Field 2018) In my case, it is a situation brought about by tin mining. What I have attempted in this work is to use the short stories and poems which are expressed through real events and people but disguised to explain the connection of the land to its human and non-human inhabitants. Thus, in linking this to the poetic concerns this study explores, one issue exposed, like the thread that connects the two, is tin mining. Tin mining and its attendant consequences can be better understood when seen in the experiences

of the inhabitants of the region where, as Baldwin notes further, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced” (p.2).

According to Engel, memory is accurate if it agrees with the person who is remembering and helps to elucidate one’s life while offering a sense of continuity and identity to the person recognising. That identity for me is in the story of the pond and tin. Engaging with autobiographical memory allows me to be sincere in capturing the personal details from my perspective and remembrance of the past. These stories reveal my identity and place me within a geographical and historical context; examples can be found in my use of names and language, as in the mention of cactus, Kuza and ponds. Memories have images that mean and evoke different things to different people. For me, the black sand meant to play after rain; the ponds were a place to see mammy water, the cactus and the eucalyptus were plants used as a natural fence. Engel further explains that memories grow out of what happens between people. People are known by what happened in their past. The story of the Plateau is understood in the knowledge of their past. This past is recovered through the collective articulation of the people's experiences via auto/biographical practice.

3.5 CREATIVE NONFICTION

Stories can be used to tell the life experiences of the writer or other people. Some stories can be autobiographical lived experiences which can be termed creative nonfiction. Although not all creative nonfiction is auto/biography, such stories are used as lenses by the reader to understand life (Tansley and Maftei, 2015). Creative nonfiction is regarded as the umbrella genre in which auto/biography sits. Creative nonfiction creates an avenue for the reader to enter another person’s world to read and follow his or her peculiar story. Through the characters and events, it opens the opportunity for the reader to experience the writer’s story and learn from them. The reader here includes first and foremost the Plateau person who in

some cases, has been told a different narrative or in some cases, no narrative at all. And in other instances, people from other regions in Nigeria and even outside Nigeria who have not had access to an account of personal or communal experiences of the Jos inhabitants. This creative exchange of experience helps to bring about mutual understanding.

The stories and poems in this work reveal an account of the people of Plateau. In addition, Tansley and Maftei (2015) have identified that contemporary practices of creative non-fiction are captured in the journey of the production of such a story. In this case, the story is not a string of events that happened afar off, which is detached. Instead, it is my story and the story of my people, what we have expereinced and have been shaped by. It is personal, and communal. It is what defines us, and makes us who we are. My stories reveal the history of tin in Plateau State. Therefore, I have included some historical fiction writing techniques, like giving voice to the characters, which of course do not necessarily imply it is a verbatim transcript of what they said at the time. It is an approximation as I am drawing on historical evidence to construct some of the poems and stories. I take inspiration from examples like Coetzee's *Summertime*, (2009) whose work is drawn from the past occurrences in his native South Africa. I have also deliberately employed some common vocabulary to the area in the choice of names and some pidgin English spoken in the area.

3.6 PRACTICE-BASED APPROACH

According to Smith and Watson (2001), reflective writings or life stories are symbolic interactions with the writer's world. Such writings connect with the human experiences embedded in the culture and history of a place and people. This conception of creative practice links with the theoretical aspect of ecocriticism which situates the relationship between the land and literature that I intend to explore in creative practice. In my case, my stories are an offshoot of my experiences within the context of my people's culture and

history. My people are from the highlands of the Jos Plateau. Their predominant occupation is farming. However, this primary source of livelihood was troubled at the advent of colonialism. The pond became the symbol with which I could relate to my world. Some of my childhood stories and pranks revolved around the pond behind my house and the school. They became significant places of interaction for me. The pond served as my place to go to, to conjure my stories and to identify myself. When I longed for someone to talk to, I often would go to the pond searching for answers.

The ability to remember events and incidents forms a people's basis, according to Fernyhough (2012). He notes that memory is the link between the past and the present. Memory is a useful tool that reminds people of who they are and where they have been. The form of memory I am engaging with is "auto/biographical memory"- which involves the narrative of things that have happened to the narrator; it is a mental construction of the (my) past. Through childhood memories, I am recollecting my lived experiences and those of people who have lived with the consequences of tin mining. The reference to me as a child and growing up through the story fits in well with the German concept of Bildungsroman, which focuses on the mental, physical and moral growth of the child (Collins Dictionary, 2017). The stories and poems show my growth process, (mentally, physically and morally). This process involves coming of age, moving from childhood to adulthood. My stories and poems capture a journeying or migration from the once naïve little girl, who would go the pond with the belief that she would see Mammy Water. It traces how, as I grew fond of the pond as a place of refuge and comfort, I also began to question the existence of such deep holes, especially as I noticed a lot of them. I give a detailed explanation in the complementary discourse.

I liken my age of innocence to the Jos land before the discovery of tin. The environment was without deep holes and had enough land for its human inhabitants to farm

on. Plants and animals did not have to move for loss of land or soil that was contaminated. At this stage, there was a place to call home with no feeling of displacement. The stage of questioning announced my entry to the adolescence age. Some of the short stories like 'Helima' and 'Nana's Kitchen' or the poem 'Saturday Morning' reveal some young, energetic and curious tendencies. The poem, 'The reminder', reveals the painful realisation I now have, of how the beautiful black sand that I used to look forward to seeing after every rainfall was a reminder of the rigour faced by the miners who washed tin for export. The Bildungsroman concept also involves a process of not just discovery but also relevance, where a person can discover his purpose and significance and how it relates to the world around him. The stories and poems dwell on some universal concepts like loss, pain and death through the different characters. They are stories with which humans can identify.

My stories are important as they engage with the story of my people and their land. According to Tansley & Maftei (2015), stories play essential roles in our individual and communal lives. They help to explain our roots, our culture and tradition. They tell a lot about where we come from. The stories and the poems around the ponds serve as a metaphor for understanding tin mining history in Plateau state. They become reminders of the once plain land that has been lost to holes and exposure to radioactive chemicals that are harmful to humans and the environment. The recollection of these childhood memories are not mere narratives of a young girl's life but are autobiographical engagements that interweave to make life meaningful (Tansley & Maftei, 2015).

Eakin (2005) asserts that stories are essential to who we are and how we see the world. The stories and poems in this thesis help define and express who I am personally and then who the people and the land on the Jos Plateau are. The stories about the pond and tin, the rocks and cactus are compositions and embodiment of who we are. My stories are expressed through autobiographical accounts, which give meaning, validation, and expression

to my experience and my people. Sturrock (2008) highlights that human life finds meaning and expression when it is made into a story. Therefore, what I am attempting to do with my stories is to connect with my world, find meaning to the questions I had as a child, and give clarity and meaning to some silent and suppressed narratives that have continued for decades. For example, the poem 'Why Stop Me?' asks how parents and society seldom discuss the ponds or its history or the dangers of such places. Perhaps tragic deaths would be avoided if parents discuss such risks with their children and if the state government or the mining corporations take the necessary precaution. Most of these ponds are left open with no fences. It is such negligent attitudes I question in this poem.

The struggle mothers and parents go through to get 'quick money' to take care of their families is what I address in 'The Reminder'. Because of land loss, most of the inhabitants hoped they could make money fast through mining. However, the reality is that they suffer under the scorching sun. Their bodies are exposed to bacteria from dirty water; they suffer body aches as they bend back and forth washing tin (Gyang & Ashano, 2009). Questions like why lands used for tin mining have not been reclaimed or why such areas are not cordoned off? Was what my young mind needed answers to.

Practice as research methodology also allows me to engage with stories and storytelling within a research context. The critics, Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett (2012) have argued that personal narratives like auto/biography, interviews and memoir are useful research tools that are desirable for understanding the relationship between people and their society (environment). They have also observed that personal narratives help reveal the dynamics of an agency that contributes to telling stories through culturally embedded narrative forms that shape both life stories and lives. They see a connection threading between individual agency, historical processes and cultural narratives. This methodology has given room for experimentation with my childhood memories in a global context. This has

become useful as K. Nelson, and Fivush (2004) drawing from Nabokov (1966) have stated that:

> In probing my childhood, I see the awakening of consciousness as a series of spaced flashes, with the intervals between them gradually diminishing until bright blocks of perception are formed, affording memory a slippery hold. (Nelson &Fivush, 2004, P.21).

While Nabokov sees a series of spaced flashes, I see a series of deep ponds. I use the recurrent theme of the pond in my work to suggest the devastating effect on the land and the people. These ponds have become death ponds, which have claimed the lives of both the young and old. I am also aware of the slippery hold that memory sometimes involves, which might not capture exact details. Still, I am also aware that I can bring a re-enactment of such experiences with the help of memory. In going back through memory, I am not just telling my stories, but I am using this medium to divulge the history and culture of my people which are captured in different stages and phases of my experience and that of others (Maynes et al., 2012, p. 3).

From these stories, the reader can understand that life stories embedded in social relationships and structures can also be expressed in culturally specific forms (Maynes et al., 2012). Maynes et al. assert that such stories can provide unique insights into the connections between individual life trajectories and joint forces beyond the individual. Thus, life stories or recollections of lived experiences can offer a methodology for understanding human agency. For example, in one of the stories, Saratu was almost a victim of rape as she was left without parental protection. On the other hand, her parents had to go out to make ends meet. We are drawn to the sad incidence of Kim's death, who lost his life due to the carelessness of

the tin miners who left the pond without a fence or proper guard. Because of the search for tin for business purposes, several others are lost.

In recollecting personal stories, individual life is connected through the stories to reveal the collective destiny. Maynes et al. (2012) suggest that when events that happen to a different life are told with historical references, it helps to understand not just the individual but also the community and their history. Personal narratives help the reader identify connections that link such stories to theirs and other people's stories. The critics Maynes et al. recognise the importance of personal narratives as material that provides an avenue for exposing new voices.

Therefore, creative practice is useful as it opens untold stories and provides alternative narratives through new voices (Maynes et al., 2012). The views presented by these stories have not been found in other writings, which is part of the suppressed narratives that this work addresses. It is not just stories about the individual; it goes beyond the individual to reflect a people. Therefore, personal narratives help to shed light and bring new perspectives on suppressed narratives. This perspective is one of my research aims, which is to use my stories to represent long and forgotten voices while exploring alternative narratives. My autobiographical writing is guided by the need to interrogate the experiences of the human and non-human and the land during the tin mining era. The research methodology combines creative practice with critical reflective writing that recognises the voices of the silenced majority and the partial narrative accounts of the impact and consequences of tin mining.

3.7 NELSON'S DYNAMIC MODEL

This section focuses on the methodology used to design the research process. The methodology is structured according to the dynamic model of practice as research (PaR) by

Robin Nelson (refer to Figure 2). Nelson's model illustrates how the researcher's approach and stance influence the different stages of the study. The model utilises a pyramid representing the "know-how", "know what", and "know that" of a research process. The researcher's general stance within the pyramid becomes a significant determinant of the research process and outcome.

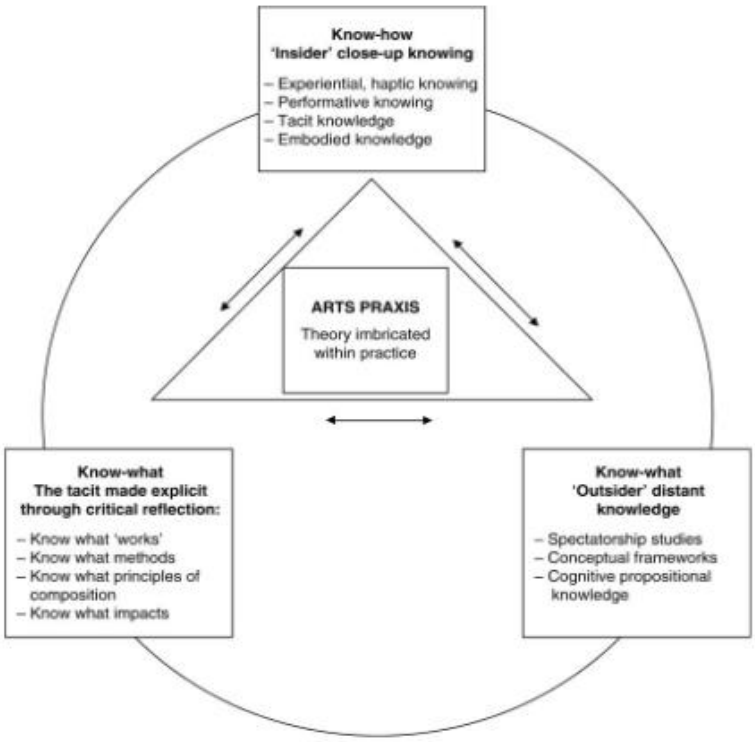

Figure 2: Dynamic Model for "Practice as Research" (Nelson, 2013)

Understanding the definition of the concept of PaR is necessary to provide a suitable methodology adopted for this work. Freeman (2010) observes that:

> practice as research involves developing practical work into knowledge by transposing the experience of what it is that one does into data and then subjecting this

> to the type of reflection, analysis and discipline that is involved in serious compositional study (P. 264).

My data here are my personal experiences as someone who lived and grew up in this place. My data also includes the experiences of others written in short stories and poems. These creative pieces are explained through the different theories and framework that conventional writing requires. Neglecting to tell these stories as inspired by historical and academic reading will mean the voices will be unheard. For the voices to be heard, the academic conventions give structure to both personal and collective lived experience.

Sjoberg and Hughes (2012) observe that the advantage of utilising PaR above other methodologies enables the inclusion of arts practice in the academic environment. Practice as research is a form of creative practice which broadens the scope of contributions to knowledge involving a process that leads to an arts-related output (Skains, 2018). Practice as research gives room for experimentation with different types of creative methods. It provides a platform which enables alternative ways of conducting research enquiry and accessing insights that may be unavailable via more conventional approaches. This, in turn, covers the gap that once existed between performing arts and academic research, in which Nelson observes "time was when there were arts practices, on the one hand, and 'academic' research on the other" (Nelson, 2013. p.3). The need to adopt other creative ways of conducting research using unconventional methods has become necessary as PaR helps us address complex and emerging questions. The acceptance of creative writing, therefore, is a consequence of PaR. This has helped to produce the methodology now known as Practice as research.

Nelson further observes that practice as research (PaR) does not often follow the conventional critical practice, which is dominated by presenting well-structured case studies.

Instead, practice as research involves different creative and suitable methods to achieve a research aim. Nelson describes a move from 'hard facts' to 'liquid knowing'- hard facts become the modus operandi of conventional academic writing that mostly follows predictable patterns and is not malleable to adapt to new situations or engagements. The move to 'liquid knowing' indicates the adoption of a fluid method that can be adjusted as the need arises during the research process to contain emerging realities. It is a knowledge process that enables the adoption of multi-methods to provide a practical understanding of a situation.

This quality of liquid knowing allows a researcher to approach the research practice in more diverse and effective ways than a conventional study would. Liquid knowledge in the PaR process enables integrating various methods and not restricted to a single method. It is found most suitable and therefore adopted in this research to achieve the research aim: to write a collection of short stories and poems to explore the effect of tin mining on the Jos Plateau. Furthermore, Barrett and Bolt (2014), explain that … "practice-led research is a new species of research, generative enquiry that draws on subjective, interdisciplinary and emergent methodologies that have the potential to expand frontiers of research'' (p.7).
This expansion provides an equitable option where creative writing through short stories and poems creates a discourse on environmental degradation, which has not been visible in the literature of environmental writing in Nigeria. Intrinsically, this research assumes this approach due to the potential of research findings to communicate the historical and psychological effect of degradation from tin mining on the Jos plateau. Creative practice provides an avenue for research into critical environmental writing on the Jos plateau, which is currently scarce.
An example of how my creative practice enables a deeper understanding and response from the reader than my critical writing is illustrated in Box 1 below

a) Critical writing on environmental degradation due to tin mining on the Jos Plateau

The Plateau environment had endured environmental degradation from 1904, which is a longer time than the Niger Delta region, which began its encounter with the degradation of its environment when Shell discovered Oil in 1958. Considering the time when tin mining started on the Jos Plateau, what can be likened to the situation on the Jos Plateau is what Rob Nixon terms as slow violence (Nixon, 2004). It has been devastation that has built up over the years to have a widespread and long-term effect. Nixon explains that this type of destruction is not violence- against the environment- that is immediate; instead, it is a devastation that has grown with 'repercussions that are calamitous' with its impact covering a wide range from humans, non-humans and the environment. Although the tin ponds were accrued over a long period, the impact of such devastation is still felt in the area decades after. There have been cases of deaths of humans and animals in such tin ponds (Etim,2007). Plants that once grew on bare grass have now been lost as the soil's toxicity does not allow plants to grow (Masok,2015). The devastating impact has been slow in manifesting, and so has the literature been silent about the impact of tin mining on the environment and its inhabitants.

b) Creative writing on environmental degradation due to tin mining on the Jos Plateau-

Glitz and Glamour

By the shine and shimmer
It lures both
Men and Women
Young and old
To its captivating embrace

For miles they walk

In the rain and the shine

Backs bent, and knees bow

In search of this treasure

So dear and deadly

Behind the shine and glitter

Holes fill the ground

Sweat covers the face

Then aches that linger

With hurt untold

Who would speak for those

Who laboured and died

Man, beast, grass, and land

All caught in a web

That words cannot utter

As illustrated in the poem in Box 1 (b), creative writing reveals the same issue as observed in the critical piece, but its impact elicits different responses. The critical piece might come across as just a piece of information about the region and the challenges its inhabitants encountered. The researcher's creative piece 'Glitz and Glamour' (also found in creative section Ponds of death) is told through the point of view of one familiar with the process of tin mining. The poem gives details of this suffering and its impact on the people and the land using words, symbols, and imagery that the critical piece does not draw on. The poem is told from the third-person omniscient point of view, which shows that the narrator (myself)

understands what was going on at the tin mines. The reader is led through the lines to see and appreciate the complicated process involved in tin mining exploration from both the human and non-human inhabitants' points of view. This is aimed at evoking emotions from the reader. The poem is written in empathy with the miners' situation, as in the following lines, which indicate the difficulty the miners encountered while at the mines.

The poem is written in short, simple words, engaging with embodied experience in their allusions to suffering in ways that a critical account could not. The poem presents an image of people who are subjected to strenuous working conditions. The result is the pain and aches they are now left with. Thus, the poem gives the suffering mentioned in the critical reading human agency. The line "*man and beast, grass and land*" (line 12) encompasses both the human and non-human in this suffering. The voice used in the poem is that of pain and bitterness. The metaphors of *backs bent, knees bow* explain the different levels and forms of the suffering. The last line, "*all caught in the web*", is symbolic of the suffering the land and its inhabitants endure. No one is spared in the process of tin exploration.

The message and extent of the land's suffering and its inhabitants are better explained through the creative practice model. Creative practice gives room for the writer's recollection of lived memories and the retelling of first-hand experiences. While the critical gives generic information, that is devoid of personal experience, creative practice takes my lived experiences and provides the platform for often neglected experiences to be told. Creative practice enables peculiar experiences, particular incidents, while critical writing can sometimes be generic and void of lived experience.

Thus, creative writing is best suited for what I aim to achieve: creating awareness and evoking sympathy and speaking on behalf of the land and its inhabitants. Through practice as research, I can adopt different literary forms to cater to the complexities surrounding tin

mining on the Jos Plateau. There are several unspoken and unknown consequences attached to tin mining on the Jos Plateau, most of these become evident through the characters and experiences in the stories and poems. The poems have a way of retelling experiences in a manner that is powerful and evokes emotions. At the same time, the short stories reveal multi-layered narratives in a concise form. I hope that the stories and poems about the history and devastation of tin mining will be able to present a better appreciation of the history of tin on the plateau.

Skains (2018) has observed that practice as research allows the input of other methods to arrive at an output that contributes to knowledge. Tim Ingold (2015) quoted in Vanini (2015) goes further to explain that as creative writers, we are not to give up on the use of words because

> "…words are, indeed, our most precious possessions and should be treated as such as a casket of sparkling jewels. To hold such a jewel is to hold the world in the palm of your hand. We can correspond with words, as letter-writers used to do, but only if we allow our words to shine." (p.8).

The challenge, then, is to find a different way of writing and allow our words to shine and speak. Through the words of the characters in the short stories or the lines of poems, I can explain the characters' feelings and experiences and their situation.

I "knew" about the death ponds and black sand as part of the residue from tin mining. However, I could not capture my know-how critically. I was not aware that I could use my knowledge and experience to write about my people's history and peculiarity. I could not connect the deaths in the ponds around me to the colonial activity that took place decades before I was born. What I knew would have remained head knowledge, and others outside my environment would not fully comprehend this connection. Nonetheless, via creative

writing, I am expressing it in a literary way. With the engagement of creative reflection, I am also able to understand the significance of the ponds and black sand, the suffering of my people and how best to explain their predicament.

As observed earlier (in my writer's journey in chapter one), there has been very little representation of the significance attached to the naming of my city as 'tin city' in the region's critical writings. What the critical writings emphasise is presented in such a way that the human experience is not fully articulated. Practice as research has allowed me to explain how the naming of the city is connected to the history of the people because tin mining is an integral part of their lives. Practice as research also allows me to chart a new understanding of tin mining in the region. Through auto/biographical process and the access to literary technique such as symbolism, I can fully understand and articulate the dynamics of the marginalised experience.

Perhaps the silence over the experiences of the inhabitants of the Jos region has been because conventional research methodologies have not been able to convey it. Therefore, it is logical to use creative-practice-based methodologies to investigate what conventional discourse cannot accommodate. Thus, my methodology becomes the logical choice used in producing the main text of this thesis. Documentation is critical to my work as it helps to record my creative process, which will connect with the entire research process. Unlike science-based research that uses empirical experiments as part of its research journey (Skaines, 2018), documentation becomes my statement of poetics, working drafts, and photographs for my work. Practice as Research is interested in the process, as well as the creative product. For this work, the process is the different drafts and stages in my literary work, offering insights into memory and the representation of experience.

In offering a review of Nelson's concept of practice as research (PaR), Hunter (2014), assert that Nelson sees documentation not as a substitute for practice but as a means of engaging critically with the researcher process. What I am engaged with is the process of memory for which my poems and short stories serves as a repository. Nelson explains that documentation moves beyond mere archival material that allows one an understanding of the past. He explains that such documented material (in my case memory of tin mining and recollection of the past) can help give a better understanding of what is presented, especially as it is drawn from experience. In this case, therefore, written work serves to project the dominant issue of tin degradation. The writing of these stories becomes my documentation since most of them are connected to lived experiences and historical facts. Through the recollection of lived experiences and memories, the practice of creative writing serves as a 'medium of research to uncover issues and attitudes that may otherwise be glossed over or not potently captured by more established research methods' (Hunter, p.166).

Additionally, Nelson's practice as research methodology became a useful option, especially as it allowed me to explore and explain my creative instinct in an academic mode. Since my work is an example of practice-based research, my creative work becomes the basis for my knowledge contribution. Nelson's model permits me to open complex issues while trying to gain insights into critical enquiry. The complexity associated with tin mining for the region's inhabitants is that, while they need the economic profit, they get from working the mines, they are plagued with the open ponds that now deface their environment and, cause death. Nelson's model helps to connect these silent issues presented in the work by showing how to express what is on my mind so that others can read and comprehend. The different stories and poems add up to present a complete narrative, just like the diagram in Nelson's model, all the triangles connect, one cannot be read outside another. The complete picture is

from the messages hidden in the characters, images, symbols and voices in the creative writings.

As represented in Nelson's dynamic model, the three angles help categorise my work into understandable parts that function to make the work complete (refer to Figure 3). The different sections represent different stages in my journey and point to using my creative pieces as a valuable contribution to my research practice.

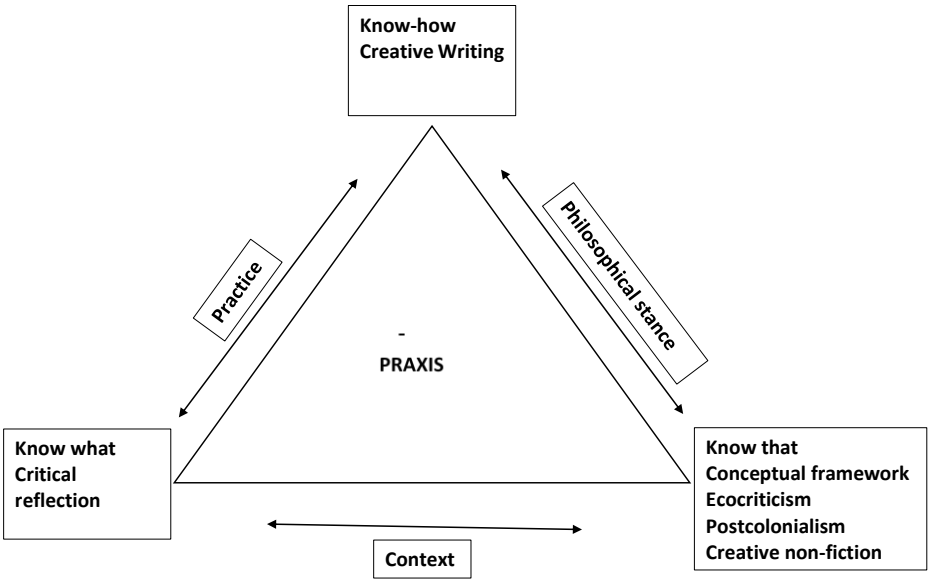

Figure 3: Model adopted for this research

3.7.1 Know-how: Creative Practice

The first point of discourse is what Nelson calls the 'Know-how'. This stage has to do with things that I naturally know how to do (that embodied knowledge), which is creative writing expressed in short stories and poems. These writings result from what I can remember and picture with my senses using memory, which comes from experiences that I was involved with most directly. Therefore, I rely on experience or the consciousness of my senses, reminding me of the black sand and ponds and using them in my creative work. My 'know-how' is my creative writing as it emerges. I am exploring with the intricacies of creative writing to better capture and construct my research in such a way that the human response I

desire is achieved. At this stage, the poems use simple language imbued with imagery and metaphors. As my creative writing skill is harnessed, I can capture some of the things I remember in short stories and poems.

3.7.2 Know-what: Critical Reflection

Another connecting thread in Nelson's diagram is 'know -what', which is the point of critical reflection. Where my poetics are reflections on my creative output. As I creatively and critically reflect, I see the ponds and black sand's significance and how they have come about. This then leads to the question of how my poetics speak to my practice. Through the statement of poetics (refer to chapter one), I can remember and write about the issue of tin mining, which becomes my medium of expression.

3.7.3 Know-that: Conceptual frameworks and theories

The stage Nelson refers to as the 'Know-that' involves the conceptual framework (refer to the conceptual framework above). This requires using conventional academic methods to situate my creative work within an appropriate academic framework while also addressing a communal problem. It helps to place my work, from the know-how (my creative pieces) which would have just been stories in my head to the know-what. The know- what becomes the output of critical reflections where others can read and benefit- drawing from examples from the stories and explaining - academically. The 'know- that' is the existing relevant knowledge, where I use approaches (like ecocriticism, auto/biography, creative practice) and concepts to enhance the practice I am engaged with. This aspect also includes the literature review to give context to my work. This stage will help me to locate myself in a field of practice while tackling the academic and practical influences that have helped me in this journey. Personal reflection and the literature of the Niger Delta have been instrumental to the search for a voice for my people, which as highlighted in my objective, is to see how to use creative writing to speak for the silent and oppressed voices (like women and children).

Through the various stages, all the connecting points presented in Nelson's dynamic model give rise to a methodology that finds expression in practice. Therefore, all the angles are connected. Suppose all I do is remember and think about the issues of devastation in my head alone, without the appropriate platform. In that case, it remains a personal memory and does not reveal the complete picture. From 'know-how' where my brain conjures it through my senses, it is translated into an act of critical reflection influenced by 'know what' which is my critical work, where I critically reflect on memory, or the image created. I give it an academic framework to express it as 'know that'. The Nelson model has helped fulfil my desire to reveal and explain the tin mining degradation in unconventional ways. It has allowed me to express my research in a way that will help to invite the reader to experience the degradation through human feelings and sympathy, which critical writing might not be able to present.

In my critical readings on the literature of the environment, particularly in Nigeria, I have come to discover that the legacy of tin mining on the plateau is not often spoken of. Therefore, such avenues if not for the means of practice as research, would remain untouched. The established literature of environmental writing in Nigeria does not capture much of the plateau's experiences that involve the effect of tin mining and its consequences. Through the platform provided by creative practice, such unspoken narratives as seen in the poems and short stories are expressed.

3.8 EXAMPLES OF SOME POEM AND SHORT STORY ANALYSES

The stories and poems in this work imply through different characters and situations the impact of tin mining on the land, human and non-human inhabitants of the region.

“Mr Silmut” is one of the stories that convey the devastating consequences of tin mining through the people's experiences. It is not just the story of a man who had worked in the tin mines and learnt to wear English clothes but also the fact that long after the ‘master’ had gone, he continued in the dressing and even eating the food of the colonial master. The attendant break-ups and hardships children face because their parents leave home to the pond to source income for the family is another example. In addition, leaving the children behind made them vulnerable.

The case of Saratu is one such example. She and the other children had the responsibility of taking care of themselves in their parents' absence. They lived in houses where they shared the main entrance; it was challenging to mind your own business. In my case**,** I was lucky to live in a bungalow. I also had food to eat when I returned from school. Sometimes I would meet someone at home, at other times just the house key, kept under the bamboo doormat.

Nevertheless, most of my friends were not so lucky. They resorted to going to other places to eat and ‘buy’ time before their parents would get home in the evening. Children were left at the mercy of strangers or adults in the house.

While growing up, I was told that a child belonged to the community and not just the parents. Therefore, when a neighbour saw a child hungry, he fed that child, because another neighbour would do the same for his child. Saratu**,** like other children her age, was left to grow, by happenstance. There was no deliberate attempt to pick children from school or take them to it. Most parents had to make ends meet. The story provides insight into the lives of the people—the reality of the people who worked the tin mines and left their families behind. The effect is the near-rape situation that would have happened to Saratu if not for the other

children's timely intervention in the compound. Parental neglect for economic reasons is one of the unwritten narratives and silences that is associated with the effect of tin mining,

In the title “To Kasa for Kuza”, I use dialect to draw the reader’s attention to the language and the meaning of such words or phrases. I chose to use the dialect spoken in my local community to represent the subject matter (to reveal the affinity of the subject to the people, the familiarity of the people/ the connection of language and land/people) what is essential to the people, is expressed in a language they are familiar with. The poem has tin as the main subject. I have chosen to refer to tin by the local name called in my community, Kuza. The language of commerce and communication during the tin mining period was Hausa. James Edwards (2009) has observed that language (particularly dialect) can serve as a powerful identity marker. I have chosen to use language to identify my region, the language I am familiar with. Gale opines that language conveys meaning and reveals information about the people who use them. The word or title gets a reader’s attention as they begin to wonder what *Kuza* means.

The use of the personification ‘You’ in the same poem gives tin, a natural mineral, human qualities to make it something vivid, real**,** with feelings and a life. I am putting tin and humans in the same plane of existence. I have done this to make an abstract object feel close to life. If it is read as a non-human element, it might not evoke much sympathy from humans. Nevertheless, placing it as something with life helps to give a different interpretation for the reader. Therefore, it can be read as the story of a human being whose life has been cut short and distorted. It helps the reader connect with the subject matter as if it were a fellow human being and understand the pain and loss of this precious mineral and even the land felt when mining occurred.

The reference to tin as the 'black queen' is because, in some communities on the Jos Plateau, there is the reference to the fact that the earth is female, it reproduces. Humans, plants and animals all come from the earth; she is considered the mother of all creatures. The earth helps plants to grow and produce food to feed both humans and animals. The earth becomes a mother to some animals who hide in her for protection, like snakes and frogs. Even the tin was hidden in her until humans came to unearth it. Thus, Mother Earth serves the dual function of the provider and protector of human and non-human inhabitants of the earth. The African mythology observes the earth is the source of all things human and non-humans alike. It is like a queen that is to be worshipped. Thus, our local festivals like the *mus tar***,** *Mwendyeng* are held in celebration of mother earth who has been gracious enough to supply us with food for the season and beyond. The earth is thus worshipped because of its relevance and importance to the survival of humans and non-human elements

The reference to the colour black is because that is what I remember seeing on the soil's surface whenever rain fell. A precious mineral that brought many people from far and near to its region. It was like a beautiful woman who many travelled far and near to watch her beauty. The idea of tin as a queen made me write the lines following the reference to the black queen as depicting images of people of different tribes and ages, coming to bend/ bow in submission to this 'queen'. Although it caused her pain eventually, the initial power and attraction tin had was such that it drew many to it.

I use a paradoxical example to explain that although the discovery of tin brought income to the Nigeria nation, the environment, where tin occurred, suffered from changes in land use. Farming which was the mainstay of the region was reduced as tin and mining activities took over space hitherto used for farming. While tin boosted the Nigerian economy, the land and people living within the region suffered the loss of a place to call home. In this home, they have a sense of belonging, a place of identity**,** and a loss of livelihood. The result

was that the land was defaced with not just physical holes and ponds, but conceptually, it created a hole and a vacuum in the people's minds and hearts.

The physical holes have become a reminder of the young and innocent lives that been lost in these' discovery holes'. They are also indicative of the painful reminder of the loss of land that was once their home. While the nation (as a group of people) prospered, the physical land (nation) suffered. The following lines express this grave loss "you brought succour to your nation/ But misery to your land" (lines 9-10). There is the metaphysical aspect of the loss too where the earth had to give way for tin to appear. The mining of tin brought the loss of the once plain land that was replaced with tin ponds and holes. In the wake of this discovery, which resulted in the loss, the debris after mining is a vivid reminder that it left 'a pool of sorrow and pain'. Literarily, it left pools or ponds of water. Metaphorically, it is tears shed because of the loss of lives and land.

The reference to the name given to a white man as 'Oyinbo' again reinforces what Gale observes as a powerful marker of identity (I discuss further in chapter eight). The term is the common name given to any white skin person, a phrase that denotes power or authority. However, the context in which the word is used here is not that of reverence but of anger and pain.

I reflect on my childhood memories in "Saturday Mornings'', with a lot of excitement, a world of innocence and bliss. The poem expresses a briskness, a hopping along, in the naïve world of an eight-year-old. It opens up fond memories of what Saturday mornings meant to me as a child; it was time for a change in breakfast for a little girl who got tired of the same breakfast of tea and bread every morning. I grew up in a home where we could afford three square meals. As is typical of children who quickly got tired over the same thing, I looked forward to a taste of something different. This explains why the first thing I

remember about Saturday morning is '*Kamu da Kose'*. Again, I use the dialectal change to express what I am familiar with, which captures that memory and conveys what is in my thought.

The description of the environment is a deliberate ploy I employ to reveal the kind of environment I grew up in. It captures the realities and experiences I encountered on my once a week journey to get what everyone in the family looked forward to. It can be likened to the many trips, and hurdles father had to make to get to the tin ponds and back to the family. What was most significant about the weekends was that I got to see father who was mostly absent throughout the week. It is a subtle depiction of the impact tin mining had on my family and many others like mine. In my little mind, his coming meant good food for the weekend**,** oblivious of the impact it had on my mother, sisters and brothers. We had a father who was now more of a stranger since he spent a few days (two with us his family) and more at the mining ponds.

The poem 'Black Sand' captures a significant theme in this creative piece. I have used the acronym of each letter of the poem's title to explain one fact or detail about tin. It gives a hint as to the colour of the natural resource. It also explains how getting the mineral, like Gold, is refined/washed severally before it brings the desired result. The reference to the process of looking for it gives the history of this mineral. The fact that it is available to a few speaks of the process involved in getting this precious mineral.

CHAPTER 4 – ENVIRONMENTAL WRITING IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the review of relevant literature on ecocriticism and postcolonialism in African literature. Also, it reveals the connection between environmental degradation and various forms of human activities. Understanding the physical environment and its relevance to the inhabitants of an area is vital in the issue of land from an African perspective. This understanding will help to highlight the consequences of human actions on the environment in the region. Although there might be varying forms of environmental exploitation in the various communities in Africa, the connecting thread in some of the literary conventions will give a better appreciation of the context of tin mining.

4.2 AFRICAN ECOCRITICAL LANDSCAPES

The physical environment has often occupied a central theme in a variety of African literature. The reference to land, human and non-human inhabitants of the environment in writing, explains the concepts of gods, identity, origin, migration, among others (Egya, 2012). For many African writers, the environment goes beyond the beauty of the scenery; it represents beliefs, customs, and serves as a symbol of identity (Okuyade, 2013). The physical environment has always been a subject of the artistic recreation of African cultural art forms like festivals of land and initiation ceremonies. Since the physical environment has always played a significant role in traditional African life and culture, it is no surprise, therefore, that the environment plays such a vital role in African literature (Okuyade, 2013)

The writer and his environment are connected. The writer often draws inspiration from aspects of nature and sometimes expresses the knowledge and experience drawn from nature in his writing (Prasanth, 2016). The portrayal and connection to nature are evident in some African novels such as Amos Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drinkard* (1952), Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Ngũgi Wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (1965) and Charles Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) among others. These writers demonstrate an awareness of the consciousness of the environment in their writings by referring to natural elements of the environment like trees, animals and birds in their writings to reveal the connection between human and the non-human inhabitants of the environment. Examples of how these writers achieve this is explained in the next paragraph.

For instance, Tutuola in the aforementioned book refers to the palm tree as the source of joy and satisfaction for the young drinkard whose only job is to take palm wine all day. In addition, Tutuola refers to the forest, and the 'white tree' as places inhabited by humans and other creatures. Ngugi refers to the natural elements like ridges, valleys, and the river to explain the people's connection to their landscape. Ngugi mentions the Honia river, which, according to the Gikuyu people's beliefs, had the power to cure any sickness and bring the dead back to life. Achebe reveals the Umuofia community as agrarian whose survival depends on the environment to provide food for the people throughout the year. The community also taps wine from the palm tree for visitors' entertainment, while the herbs from the trees are used for medicines. Similarly, Charles Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* shows the ecological connection between the Zimbabwean people and their land. In the book, Mungoshi shows how the land is not just a physical source of sustenance but the glue that holds the Shona tradition together (Agofure, 2016).

African history expert Ali Mazrui notes that a partnership between humans and nature existed in traditional African societies. Some animals lived in the same home as humans,

while others roamed the wild (qtd in Okuyade, 2013). Humans relied on non-human inhabitants like animals and plants for food. Trees were used as firewood for cooking and building homes to provide shelter. Africans held aspects of nature, such as rocks, rivers, and trees as sacred (Okuyade, 2013). In some instances, the natural environment became the refuge to which humans ran for shelter and protection. The critic, Ojaide asserts that in some African religions, groves were an integral aspect of their spirituality as it served a dual dimension of shelter and provided a form of spiritual protection (Okuyade, 2013). The inhabitants of the tin mining region of the Jos Plateau exhibit a similar spiritual attachment to the environment. In referring to the spiritual significance of Berom land where most of the tin mining activities took place, Mwadkwon (2010), notes that sacrifices were made to appease the gods and thank them for the provision of fertile land which produced food and provided sustenance.

Recent writings on the environment are shifting focus from the portrayal of communal cultures and tradition to a call for the preservation of the environment. Current emphasis dwells on sustainable actions that enable human-environment interactions while preserving the environment. The rising consequences of environmental degradation are increasingly reflected to secure the harmony that early African literature portrayed as the relationship between humans and their environment. In the twenty-first century, African literature provides evidence of the environment's degradation by human activities, unlike early writings that reflect a more stable environment. Therefore, concern for the preservation of the environment has replaced the initial writing on nature and its connection with cultural practices which was a significant characteristic of the early nature writing of some African writers (Prasanth, p.2).

In the Collection of essays *The Natures of Africa* (ed Moolla, 2016), Chengy Wu observes that although African writers have been involved in writing about the environment

from the early twentieth century, their focus was on the aesthetics of their environment and experiences of the people. Wu notes that this portrayal of the environment was not written with the consciousness to promote environment-oriented literacy. By implication, the initial objectives of the writers were to express and celebrate indigenous culture and tradition. However, this later formed a foundation for the study in the term we now have as ecocriticism.

Writings of African novelists such as Achebe, Tutuola, and Ngugi portray two key aspects: consciousness of the environment, and dependence on the environment. However, decades later, that connection was lost due to colonial activities where indigenous practices were replaced, and lands considered sacred and significant to the people were lost. In this context, ecocriticism in the African background is born out of colonialism which became a threat to traditional cultures and practices (Santangelo, 2014). An example of the negative effect of colonialism is the Jos Plateau situation where the loss of land due to tin mining activities has led to the loss of sacred lands used for sacrifices to the gods of the area. The loss of such sacred land is what I refer to in the poem 'As Oyinbo Come' in the creative piece above.

4.3 THE CONCEPT OF AFRICAN ECOCRITICISM

To understand the concept of African ecocriticism, the study of its natural environment in relation to the social, cultural and religious life of the people is critical (Vital, 2008). According to Vital, African ecocriticism also engages with the concept of postcolonial criticism which arises from "colonial relations and their aftermath covering a long historical span" (p.99). Also, Vital opines there is a need to develop African ecocriticism so as to explain the environment and its significance to the African people. Such a proposal of an Afro-centred criticism will open avenues for the interconnection between humans and their

natural environment. Vital further explains that an understanding of the different roles, spiritual and cultural, that nature performs with respect to African people will help to provide a better understanding of ecocriticism in Africa. Vital emphasises the need for interaction between the environment and its inhabitants to find our existence. Thus, the knowledge of the culture of the writer's background is useful in deploying specific historical instances or examples employed by the writer. For example, the understanding of the cultural significance of the environment can enhance a better representation of the challenges of land degradation of the Jos Plateau environment. In this case, the history of tin mining has informed my writing, hence through these creative pieces, as presented above, a better representation of my environment is revealed.

In her book *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson (2002) observes that the existence of the story of life on earth has primarily been that of the connection between living things and their environment. Carson explains that the living condition of the earth and its inhabitants is moulded and given form by the environment. Moreover, human activities like gas flaring, oil exploration and tin mining have led to an imbalance and disturbance in the ecosphere. These different forms of pollution destabilise the natural environment and have also caused harm to the same humans involved in contaminating the environment. Carson notes that some of these harmful activities on the environment are irrevocable, thus making the impact of such consequence lasting. An example of such negative aftermaths that have a lasting impact is the tin ponds of Jos. Also, in the Jos area, harmful chemicals due to tin ore mining, expose plants and animals to radiation, making such areas uninhabitable (Masok, 2015). Some of these chemical extracts from tin, flow into rivers where humans and sometimes animals drink. Carson claims this is one of the significant problems affecting human beings, that have resulted from their own activities against the environment.

4.4 POSTCOLONIALISM AND ECOCRITICISM IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

The term postcolonialism can refer to either the period after colonialism or the aftermath of colonial rule. Postcolonialism can also mean a critical theory that refers to a system of government that took over lands and resources of their colonies. The critics Huggan and Tiffin observe in their book *Green Postcolonialism* (2007) that the incursion of Europeans into other areas resulted in the dispossession of the indigenous peoples from their lands, cultures and traditional practices. Graham and Tiffin argue that under European colonial rule, resources of the invaded, conquered and settled territories were exploited for imperial profit. In this context colonial rule brought about the loss of land and culture. More on the aftermath of colonialism (postcolonial theory) is discussed in chapter 5.

The African critic Sule Egya (2016) observes that African writers such as Okot p' Bitek in *Song of Lawino* (1966), Kofi Awooner in *This Earth, My Brother* (1972), and David Diop's *Africa,* (1975) have portrayed issues of colonialism in relation to the clash of cultures and have drawn inspiration from nature to convey the various forms of conflicts associated with colonialism. Their writing depended on traditional forms of orature to reveal their culture and their experiences as people (Egya, 2016). These writers had to fashion out an identity for themselves in an already existing dominant colonial narrative. The consciousness of their environment and the knowledge of their traditional culture is what they portray in their writings to define them as people. Bitek uses aspects of his people's oral tradition, where satirical songs are used as sarcasm to express how western culture influenced traditional African values. In the poem Song of Ocol in response to Lawino, the writer uses the character of Ocol' to show how colonialism affected their traditional beliefs and practices. In the poem, Ocol's husband, influenced by western culture, offered to help transform the African

environment, not considering that the transformation will lead to the loss of traditional values and cultures.

Thus, the writer draws inspiration and uses elements of the environment, such as trees and rivers, to portray the environment's state in its natural form. Knowledge of the people and their environment enables the writer to better express the people's experiences through his writings. Okot draws on the knowledge of his oral tradition to dwell on the aftermath of colonialism. Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother*, illustrates how the traditional practice of Ghanaian culture, especially his Ewe tradition and ritual is connected to the environment. Awoonor also decries the loss of religious practice because of colonialism. Egya (2016) particularly notes that this form of the discourse deals with how African writers have moved from the aesthetics of their environment to criticise the extent of environmental degradation by colonialism.

There has been an increasing reflection of the consequences of colonial activities in African literature (Moolla, 2016). A classic example of the representation of how colonial invasion has interfered with the environment is the analogy of *Things Fall Apart*. In the book, Achebe engages in instances where oral literature in proverbs centred on the connection between the Igbo earth goddess and their land. The worship of Ani, the earth goddess, constitutes a process where the relationship between their ancestors, and the land is used to invoke the blessings of the goddess for the coming harvest. Moolla adds that Achebe observed a widespread disconnection from the worship of Ani with the advent of colonialism. In the Igbo community, the attachment to the land is not only about the human inhabitants but also about the ancestors and spirits who have occupied the land long before the advent of colonialism. Hence, the dispossession of the inhabitants from their land leads also to the dispossession of the people's beliefs and traditions which is engrained in their past.

Similarly, in the Berom community of the Jos Plateau, the inhabitants have a strong link with their lands, cultural beliefs and traditions. It is believed that the potential to produce a bountiful harvest is determined by the weight of the sacrifice offered to the gods of the land. With the advent of colonialism, the link between the blessings of their gods on the inhabitants and the productivity of the land was broken because of the acquisition of land for mining purposes (Mwadkwon, 2010). Consequently, the spiritual significance of the lands was lost. This concern about the loss of the land signals the beginning of a modern approach to ecocriticism in contemporary African literature where writers decry the loss of their land to colonial authority and policies (Okuyade, 2013). Land loss signals a loss of value and identity, as land is of great importance to the African people. As Franz Fanon (2001 reprint) explains, "For a colonised people the most essential value, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and above all, dignity (p. 9).

4. 5 AN OVERVIEW OF ECOCRITICISM IN NIGERIAN LITERATURE

Egya (2014) has observed that contemporary Nigerian writers draw a lot of inspiration for their work from the environment. Egya notes that of great significance is that the writers' consciousness of the existence of the non-human elements of the environment such as animals, trees, rivers, and hills, is reflected in their writings. Examples from early Nigerian writers as already mentioned like Amos Tutuola in *The Palmwine Drinkard,* Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart,* Christopher Okigbo in 'Mother Idoto' among others showed a lot of the human and nature connection in their works. Tutuola shows humans' relationship to their environment in the character of the Palmwine tapster who depends on palm wine from the

palm tree to be happy, satisfied and even survive. On the other hand, Achebe paints a picture of Umuofia community and its people who depend on the land for food, and observance of certain practices like new yam festival and wrestling as functions carried out in harmony with nature. Okigbo, in his poem, shows how the people depend and worship non-human elements like the python Idoto to provide hope and security for its worshippers.

However, current environmental writings in Nigeria tend to focus on how human activities have consequences on the physical environment. Agofure (2016) observes that Nigerian literature is becoming especially concerned with the effects of human actions like gas flaring, oil exploration and tin mining on the environment. These activities become inimical to the survival of the human and non-human inhabitants of such areas. Besides, such actions have become dangerous endeavours which destroy sources of sustenance and livelihoods.

The various forms of degradation have produced a growing concern that has necessitated a call to preserve the environment. Among writers who are preoccupied with environmental degradation issues in Nigeria are writers from the Niger Delta region. Ever since Shell discovered crude oil in the Delta region in 1956, inhabitants of the region have continued to experience the degradation of their land and the loss of their social and economic life (Okuyade, 2013). This loss has harmed the livelihood of the people and has greatly affected their health. For these reasons, the inhabitants of this region cry out against a system that has compelled them to abandon their land because of the devastating effect of oil exploration (Chuma-Udeh, 2007). Also, the critic, Tanure Ojaide, laments that the health hazards associated with oil exploration, such as contamination from methane and other chemicals, are enormous and mostly go unchecked (Okuyade, 2013). Consequently, the air they breathe, their land, and the water they drink become polluted.

4.6 ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS IN NIGER DELTA

The Niger Delta is an area in the south-eastern part of Nigeria which has experienced over six decades of environmental degradation associated with oil exploration. The writers from this region decry the land loss and a place to call home in their writings. They also lament the loss of the means of livelihood by the indigenous inhabitants, including farming and fishing. The issue of land is of great significance to the African people as it links them to their roots (Okuyade,2013). The loss of such land signals the loss of their heritage. Therefore, many African writers have chosen to express these damages and environmental degradations through their writings. This approach has become imperative as most of the literature of the Niger Delta is inspired by the close connection these writers share with their land. Egya (2014) observes that the environment's flora and fauna serve as inspiration for them in their writing. Writers like Ojaide in *Delta Blues and Home songs*, Niyi Osundare in *The Eye of the Earth*, Ogaga Ifowodo in *Oil Lamp* draw from the environment as their inspiration for writing. They address environmental pollution issues and diverse forms of degradation and employ literature as a tool to create awareness and sensitivity to the environment.

An example of one such writer is the late environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa who used his writings, poems, and letters to condemn his environment's devastation by the multinational oil company Shell. Saro-Wiwa combined his role as a writer and environmental activist to speak against his people's oppression by Shell. While under arrest in 1995, Saro-Wiwa, in a letter to William Boyd, attributes his ability to speak for his people, not as a politician or a businessman but through his writing, which he claims, “makes me feel good”. (Platform, 2015, Action SaroWiwa, p.1). Most Niger Delta writers, like Saro-Wiwa, are involved in ecological concerns, using literature as a means of advocacy for their environment and issues of human rights (Losh, 1999).

4.7 A COMPARISON OF THE DEGRADATION IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION AND THE JOS PLATEAU

Niger Delta literature is preoccupied with the adverse effect of oil exploration occasioned by the oil companies operating in the area. Early Niger Delta literature comprises poetry collections that were preoccupied with environmental issues, such as Tanure Ojaide's *Children of Iroko* (1973) and Gabriel Okara's *Fisherman's Invocation* (1978). The literature of the region reveals how the land has suffered because of the continuous oil drilling, which has degraded the environment.

Similarly, the Jos Plateau in central Nigeria, like the Niger Delta, has been a region that has suffered environmental degradation since tin mining began on the plateau in 1902. Writers from the Niger Delta area, like Ken Saro-Wiwa, Tanure Ojaide, and Obari Gomba, voiced their region's devastation through their works. Their literature has drawn local and international recognition to the peculiarity of the destruction in their land. Their writings have placed the region on the national and global literary circle. On the other hand, although the Jos Plateau has faced similar issues, their writers do not have literary works that provide a detailed account through their literature. Perhaps it is associated with the fact that large scale mining in the Jos Plateau has reduced while oil degradation is still ongoing. Nonetheless, the adverse effects of tin mining and oil degradation have continued and are still felt today.

The Plateau environment has endured and suffered environmental degradation since 1904. This suffering means the environment has been exposed to degradation for longer than the Niger Delta region, which began experiencing the deterioration of its environment when Shell discovered oil at Oloibiri in 1958. Considering the time when tin mining started on the Jos Plateau, what can be likened to the Jos Plateau situation is what Rob Nixon terms as 'slow violence' (Nixon, 2011). It has been devastation that has built up over the years to have

a widespread and long-term effect. Nixon explains that this type of destruction is not immediate but instead, it is a devastation that has grown with ‘repercussions that are calamitous’ (Nixon, p.5). It impacts humans, non-humans, and the environment. This is another reason why the Jos Plateau writers (perhaps) are less articulate about the devastation. However, it is clear that just as the devastating impact has been slow in manifesting, and so has the literature been slow in representing the impact of tin mining on the environment and its inhabitants. Some examples of my creative work that reveal this slow violence process include ‘Plateau the beautiful’, ‘He lured me’, and ‘I swear I was a virgin’. More details concerning the various forms of degradation will be examined in chapters 5, 7 and 8.

While environmental degradation is still going on in the Niger Delta, the aftermath has become the most devastating for the Plateau region. Nixon admits that to portray such silent but deadly issues, creative ways to draw global attention to the consequences of tin mining has become necessary. This approach is required because although commercial activities in the tin ponds have ceased, the ‘long-term’ effects continue to plague the area's inhabitants and the physical environment itself. Nixon further suggests that the need to project this devastation through ‘various narrative’ forms requires combating the slow but effective menace of this type of devastation.

4.8 ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS OF MINING REGIONS IN BOTH THE UK AND JOS

The critic Al Gedicks (2001) sums up the condition of the regions of the world where natural resources are being exploited and lament that such people have become exposed to the negative changes that affect their environment. This assertion is true of regions like Jos and areas in the UK where there has been tin and coal mining. It is beyond the remit of this

research to consider the effect of mining outside of the Jos Plateau in detail. However, I include some brief references to indicate the extent of parallels between the effects of mining in Jos, which relates directly to the thesis' main subject and effects in some of the areas where mining occurred in the UK.

Tin was discovered in commercial quantity on the Jos Plateau by the colonial authority led by George Nicholas in 1902. The exploration and mining of tin on the Jos Plateau led to the contamination of the soil around the mining areas. During the UK's industrial revolution, similar effects also occurred**.** Cornwall, Devon and Wales provided natural minerals like coal, copper and tin, which helped to power the steam engines (William Rowland, 2017**).** Such mining activity helped in boosting the industrial revolution in these areas. However, as Banks and Banks (2001) observed, there is also historical evidence of pollution in areas in the UK where coal mining occurred. Price and Rhodes (2020) report that air pollution was a significant consequence of coal mining in Wales. In addition, they note that in Wales, large amounts of coal waste known as spoil tips covered the land's surface, rendering the land unproductive and in some cases unsafe. Similarly, in the Jos environment tin wastes, known as tin tailings, resulted in soil that was unproductive regarding agricultural purposes, with Mwangvwat (2014) noting that the contamination of their land left the inhabitants of the Jos region with little land to cultivate agriculturally.

Gedicks further laments that because of the people's dependence on the environment for their livelihood, inhabitants of mining regions like the Jos Plateau, Cornwall, and Wales among others, endure hardship as harmful material contaminates their region. In a similar vein, the Jos environment lost its natural beauty as tin ponds defaced the environment. People became exposed to radiation emitted from the residue of soil dug from the ground (Masok, 2010).

Additionally, in the Jos region, the soil around the tin mining area has been contaminated with toxic soil. Emissions from the soil bring out radiation that causes diseases like cancer that are harmful to the body (Ademola 2008, Masok et al., 2015). From the preceding, we can assume that experiences of degradation of the atmosphere for the inhabitants of mining areas, seems to be the shared experiences for people living around mining areas.

With advancements in technology came the use of machines to drill the ground for precious minerals like tin and petroleum. In the process of the production of tin, for example, the once plain land has been overtaken by contaminated ponds and soil. The outcome of tin mining has resulted in the separation of the people from their land, and their dependence upon the land for sustenance has been lost. It has become evident from the preceding, that there has been a separation of harmony between the land and the inhabitants (as in the Plateau region). This lack of balance is what has provided a basis for my creative and critical writing.

CHAPTER 5 – COLONIALISM, TIN AND POSTCOLONIAL THEORY IN CONTEXT

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Colonialism brought the colonised territories' wealth and riches to the colonial government (McLeod, 2013). This helped the British colonial governments to expand and increase their territories primarily through trade in the early 20th century (McLeod, 2013). The economic expansion enabled the colonial administrations to control the natural resources of regions such as Nigeria, a protectorate of the British government in the 1900s. The relationship between Britain and Nigeria allowed the British-owned Royal Niger company to acquire and take charge of the resources of the area. The Royal Niger Company under Sir Goldie sought to establish an agreement which gave it the right to own "half a share of the mineral rights over a large area especially of the region lying to the north between the Niger and Benue river for 99 years" (Freund, 1981, p.14). Through this agreement, the Jos area under the Bauchi region was handed over to the Royal Niger Company.

With the discovery of the source of tin on the Jos plateau by George Nicolas, a British engineer from Cornwall in 1902 as mentioned earlier, the Royal Niger Company now had the permission it needed to gain exclusive access to mine (Freund,1981). Freund observed that through the exclusive licence to explore the natural resources, the Royal Niger Company obtained the monopoly of the Jos Plateau covering an area of 2,916 square miles (p.4). The licence gave Britain the right to begin mining tin in commercial quantity on the Jos Plateau. Thus, the agreement between the Royal Niger Company and the Nigerian government marked the beginning of Europeans' coming to Plateau State. Consequently, it established the

beginning of the economic deal that the British colonial government had over Plateau land and its resources (Freund, 1981).

5.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JOS PLATEAU

The Jos Plateau is geographically located in the centre of Nigeria and covers about 53,583 square kilometres (Mwadkwon, 2010). Located in the north-central region of Nigeria, the Jos Plateau's physical topography is plain and rocky. It has few trees, unlike the forest regions of the southwestern part of Nigeria. It is home traditionally to the Beroms, Afizere, Anaguta and Ngas, among other indigenous tribes. In describing the people and their occupation before the colonial invasion, the historian, Monday Mwangvwat, states that the people's economic mainstay on the Plateau was agriculture (Mangvwat, 2013). Therefore, cultivation of land was crucial to them. Therefore, any damage to the land would damage their religious tradition and form(s) of worship.

Accordingly, Mwadkwon (2010) opines that some sacrifices were performed in praise of the gods for leading them to their environment, a place where they could call home, a place of sustenance. As such, the people were involved in traditional practices that had a close connection to the land. Similarly, the Beroms, whose land was among those used for tin mining, were a people whose traditional religion was eco-sensitive; it took note of and was conscious of the environment (Mwadkwon, 2010). The indigenous inhabitants of the land usually, during their festivals, prayed that the land be fruitful. Thus, they believe that it was in answer to their prayers that the gods blessed the land with so many mineral resources like tin. However, the natural resource later became their bane as it swallowed up their young and old, humans and animals.

Consequently, the colonial government's decision to control the people's land to produce tin had severe ramifications for the inhabitants on the Plateau.

5.2 TIN MINING HISTORY JOS, PLATEAU STATE NIGERIA

Tin ore was the natural mineral that drew the colonial administration's attention to the Jos region of Plateau state Nigeria in 1902. The natural mineral was a beneficial material during the second industrial revolution in Britain (Bridge & Fredriksen, 2012). The late 19th century to the early 20th century witnessed an increase in tin production with the product finding its way into households in Europe and America. Bridge and Fredriksen (2012) observe that tin production increased so rapidly that by the second decade of the twentieth century, Nigerian tin was needed in the United Kingdom, as raw material for a coating for cables, in fixing electrical circuits and telephone networks (Bridge & Fredriksen, 2012). This natural resource was also useful in producing canned foods, helping with food preservation, and facilitating cooking (p.12). Newman (2010) observes that tin was used to produce pots and plates for the domestic market but later became useful for the canned food industry. Of significance also is tin's part in the production of military weapons and equipment used in the First World War. This production contributed to the increasing demand for tin production in the 1920s.

The discovery of tin on the Jos Plateau in 1902 and the consequent wealth it brought triggered the region's socio-ecological growth. According to Etim (2017), this natural resource became the leading export earner in Nigeria and placed the nation among the tin mining countries of the early 20th century. Morrison (1977) notes that before the discovery of oil in the southern part of Nigeria, the exploration and production of tin had begun in Jos Plateau. Morrison observes that beginning from the early 19th century to 1930, about £30, 000000 worth of tin was exported, making it the top revenue earner for Nigeria in the 1930s. But while the nation blossomed, the land suffered degradation. In contrast with the Delta

region, where writers used the medium of literature to decry their land's deterioration, the writers on the Plateau have remained silent on this issue. Although writers from the Jos region have written about issues like marriages, sectarian crisis, and the topography of the plateau**,** the silence over the physical and psychological effect of tin mining has, as noted earlier, prompted the motivation for this work.

5.3 TIN AND THE JOS LANDSCAPE

Many changes occurred to the physical landscape of the Jos Plateau since tin mining began in 1902. The Jos Plateau's physical terrain was disturbed and distorted to provide tin for refineries and industries in Europe, particularly Britain. The process of tin mining opened the Jos environment to exploitation and left dangerous ponds and sand dunes in its trail (Gavin& Frederickson, 2012). Tin mining altered the physical terrain on the Jos plateau and the social structure of its inhabitants. The once quiet and unknown region became home to an influx of people from all over the country. Because of the success from the abundant tin on the Jos mines, labourers from various parts of Nigeria were required to work the mines.

Tin transformed the Plateau region into an extractive tin-mining economy. The Plateau landscape and forms of social organisation significantly altered as many companies had to be opened to cater to the growing tin market. The tin market rose in significant numbers in the first two decades of production. Mining seemed like a fruitful venture, especially that the tin on the Plateau became recognised globally. Also, its production provided employment opportunities. However, human psychological and environmental implications were neglected. Of significant impact was how tin mining affected the source of livelihood of the people in the area. Because of the type of tin mining production, its impact brought about ecological despoliation and scarce land for agriculture. The scarce land resulted in conflict over land access for agriculture and mining, especially as some of the land

allotted for mining had the richest soil (Freund,1981). This contributed to reducing land for farming.

Besides, Freund explained that tin-mining was a form of pressure not just in tin extraction but also on the land and mine workers. Many hazards such as breaking of limbs, falling into tin mining holes were encountered by those who dug pits, washed gravels, and carried tin ore from the site to the river. The environment also suffered from the digging that took place.

5.4 TIN EXPORT

While quoting Hodder (1959), Freund (1981), notes that transporting raw tin to the port for export to Britain was undertaken by the indigenous inhabitants on whose lands the resources were mined. The journey usually took 12 days covering about 200 miles from the tin site to Loko where tin sacks were conveyed to the port at Forcados in the Eastern part of Nigeria and then shipped to Liverpool in the United Kingdom. Because of the length of time, it took for the tin to arrive at the port at Forcados, construction of a railway closer to the tin mining areas to facilitate transportation to the port became necessary. While this was regarded as some form of development, it was done to further colonial endeavour. Thus, through colonial activities industrialisation was brought to the region and in the words of Calvert, “the region has become the better for it” (cited in Bridge & Frederiksen, 2012, p. 12). It seemed like a touch of modernisation and advancement with the rail service construction for tin transportation.

However, while tin mining provided the people with a power station, electricity, urban growth and placed the region on the global scale, it also led to the loss of land and identity, with portions of land considered the ancestral roots of the people taken over for

mining purposes. The main aims of the commercial venture and its trappings were not to develop the region for the indigenous people but to achieve the colonial administration's desires: to mine tin and make profits that were not reinvested in the region.

Tin mining was used as a conquest tool by the colonialists, bringing industrialization to the region and taking away tin. Valorisation was the system used on the Jos Plateau where the owners of lands were forced to work on their lands to provide for themselves (Hodder, 1959). They no longer had control over the fields but had to work on them. Also, since farmlands were scarce, food became expensive, to be able to afford food to feed their families, they had to work in the mines. The colonialists made it look like they were doing the people a favour by providing modern development. However, the implications of the hazards that came with this development were not considered. It seemed like a fruitful venture, especially when tin on the Plateau became recognised globally. However, although its production provided employment opportunities, human and environmental implications had been neglected. While there was global advancement, there was also geographical despoliation, as the colonialist venture succeeded, the land and people suffered.

5.5 POSTCOLONIAL CONTEXT

The activities of past colonial administrations prompted the emergence of postcolonialism. As such, postcolonialism focuses on ways in which colonial activities affect the land and its inhabitants. Postcolonial theory involves the writing and reading of literature written about countries that were previously under colonial rule. Therefore, it attempts to chronicle the challenges, struggle and experiences of the people and their environment during colonial times. A crucial emphasis in postcolonial discourse is to denounce misrepresentations of authentic experiences of formerly colonised people. It aims, instead, to project real-life

experiences of these people. This has become necessary because of the shortage of voices of experience that can give an accurate representation.

One of the emphases of postcolonialism is how literature has been collated and written to distort the experiences of people under colonial rule. The need to give an accurate representation becomes necessary since people, in some cases, have presented narratives that seem to distort the gravity of these experiences. One example of such misrepresented or distorted narratives are the accounts given by Governor Girouard in 1908 and Albert Calvert in 1912 about the Jos tin fields. Governor Girouard explains that,

> West Africa today is probably, in every respect, safer to live in. (Gavin and Frederiksen, 2012, p.2)

While it claims that colonialism made the land safe, the land became more dangerous because of the creation of the ponds. Another example of such inaccurate narratives was by Albert Calvert, who argued that,

> The fact that in little more than a decade British rule has reduced order out of chaos in Northern Nigeria and has opened up a busy and promising tin field in a district which twelve years ago swarmed with hostile natives is one upon which all concerned in the peaceful revolution have reason to be proud. (Albert Frederick Calvert (1912) in Gavin and Frederiksen, 2012, p.2).

The statements above do not consider the consequences of tin mining on the environment or its inhabitants.

In response to statements such as those quoted above, postcolonial theory comes to the fore. It is a theory focused on opening a way for people from these colonised regions to articulate their identity and their experiences in contrast to previous external representations. Spivak (1988) notes that postcolonialism seeks to re-present or retell the colonial experience,

especially in literary works. It does this to reveal the experiences of the indigenous people and their land. In this context, the current thesis positions itself as a work that attempts to present, through real-life experiences captured in short stories and poems, a narrative of the voice of experience.

Postcolonial theory focuses on the effects of colonial practices and how they affect the people, land, and culture (Ashcroft et al., 2006). It emphasizes the aftermath of colonial activities. In the Jos region, among the many impacts of tin mining are the mining ponds scattered over the state in the aftermath of tin mining. As a result of the large machines used for commercial tin mining, significant landscape changes occurred, leading to water contamination, resulting in steep lands, mounds of sand, deep valleys, and paddocks. These distortions increased the risk of erosion when it rained. Thus, the devastation is felt in most of the state. One of the residents of the tin area as reported by Faden (2014), in the video documentary (100 years of neglect) has lamented that "The story of mining exploration in Plateau state is that of daylight robbery by the colonial masters in collaboration with the then Nigerian government'' (Faden 2014). The resident laments further that rather than counting the gains, the people are counting the number of abandoned mining ponds. The ponds have become a source of nightmare. Areas, where children are meant to play, have been taken over by the ponds around. Most of these ponds are about 100 metres deep which becomes dangerous to the children and inhabitants. (Faden, 2014).

Ashcroft et al. (2006) further explain that postcolonial theory is interested in how traditions and cultures have been affected by the presence of colonialism and the aftermath of that effect. The traditional farming system that existed on the plateau, where groups would take turns to visit each other's farms and help and have the same gesture returned, was lost. There were no more people to farm since most people turned to mining. The few that could

help on the farms now demanded to be paid in cash. Thus, they began introducing an individualistic practice, which was not so before the introduction of mining.

Traditional leaders too were affected by this disintegration of the social fabric, as they could not enforce the customary laws that held their people together. They had already begun to compromise when sacred lands were given for the mining of tin with little resistance and in exchange for gin, whisky, and mirror (Freund). As mining took up most of the farmlands, the practice was lost since there was not enough land to practise shifting cultivation. Besides, most of the land was now controlled by the colonial administration, with the indigenes having limited access to ownership.

The continuous use of the same portions for farming over long periods often led to low yield. Freund (1981) notes that there was hardly any unused agricultural land left during and after tin mining. The scarcity of land and the continuous use of limited land also contributed to low diet because of poor crop yield. Both the land and culture were affected by tin mining. In the traditional setting, land distribution was done on family and clan basis but has now become a product to be purchased. This meant only the rich or those with cash could afford it mostly as it was also now under colonial control. The deterioration of the social and communal fabric continued to such an extent that most homes and families were affected. Most men were out in the tin fields, leaving their wives and children at home. After a while, the women joined in, selling cooked food to the workers. Therefore, children were left to cater for themselves.

Also, Ashcroft et al. (2006) identify that one of the significant features of postcolonial literature is that it is concerned with place and displacement. Place in this context refers to the physical environment, which is home to most of these inhabitants. Displacement, in the sense that those who have lost their lands have been displaced from their traditional homes as lands

collected from the indigenous people for colonial purposes, meant losing a place to call home. The people had to be relocated from that which gave them a sense of identity and belonging. Therefore, the need to preserve one's identity became of crucial concern, since as it is in discovering a place that one's self is discovered (Ashcroft et al, 2006).

Postcolonial theory goes further to examine how writers from countries that have been colonized attempt to portray and even celebrate their cultural identities to counter colonial representations of them (Spivak, p.6). It was in a bid to counter the European narrative that Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* was written. Achebe wrote to situate the African village and its inhabitants as a people with tradition and culture, a people very much in tune with their environment. It is assumed that it was with the introduction of colonial practices that indigenous cultures and practices were lost. Ngugi Wa' Thiong'o also wrote in his native language Gikuyu to resist the use and dominance of language as one of the coloniser's tools to dominate the conquered territory (Ashcroft et al.). Postcolonial theory, therefore, allows writers to identify or reveal the oppressor and the oppressed.

However, the postcolonial theory's current focus is not just restricted to the legacies that were introduced by colonialism but extends to what happens to the people concerned: how they are, where they are and how they will navigate a future for themselves (Christopher Flynn, video). Edward Said (2014) has noted that postcolonialism deals with how studies of the Middle East and Africa were influenced and built on the West's imperialist systems. This is seen in the introduction and payment of taxes in Jos a system not previously was used there. It is also evident in the use of heavy equipment for mining on lands that were considered sacred, thus constituting neglect of traditional values by the colonialist.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Against the background outlined so far, I intend in this work to explore the colonial legacy of language, food, dressing and loss of land on the Jos Plateau. while also exploring Gayatri Spivak's argument on the class positions in *Can the subaltern speak*? (Spivak, 1988). I will focus on Spivak's argument for the need for females to speak on behalf of the subaltern, which means the women and young girls are affected by tin mining. In addition, Spivak urges the enlightened intellectual to speak on behalf of those who cannot. Spivak's positions motivate me to speak for the women and girls in the region where I come from using my short stories and poems about the colonial legacy of tin mining on the Jos Plateau.

CHAPTER 6 - WOMEN AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

6.0 INTRODUCTION

Autobiographical accounts have become significant and useful in helping to understand the experience of a person or a group of people. Since autobiography is the story of either an individual or collective life, it affords privileged access to witness ‘first-hand’ people's experience (Gardner, 2008). Although there have been other narratives on the Jos tin mining like studies on the history and nature of mining, very little comes close to considering the people and other non-human inhabitants' experiences. Very few examine how tin mining has affected the people or the land physically and psychologically. In addition, not much is known about the extent of land degradation and how this has affected both human and non-human inhabitants. Autobiographical writing provides the defining platform to reveal these real-life experiences. Consequently, the choice of autobiography as a medium to convey tin mining's devastating effect on the plateau has become suitable for my work.

James Olney (1980) explains that “autobiography is the story of a distinctive culture written in individual characters and from within which offers a privileged access to an experience that no other variety of writing can offer” (P.13). Olney's statement buttresses the importance of autobiographical writing, especially as it allows me to express my knowledge first as an African female writer who has lived through the experience of tin mining. Through autobiography, I can present my perspective as a woman who has lived and had privileged access to the region. This type of writing about the experiences of the inhabitants has not been done before. I am therefore providing this information as an autobiographical researcher. Although I acknowledge that there will be limits, especially as my own

experience might be limited, I believe it is worth commenting and sharing to provide my input.

It is essential to hear the female voice and experience, especially as Olney (1980) explains, “women writers have not always been given due consideration as makers of literature” (p.15). Meanwhile, women have experiences worth reading about, and we have something to add to the literature. The question to ask, therefore is why women’s writing has not been given due consideration. Gusdorf (qtd in Freeman, 2007) notes that traditionally autobiographies were written by men to reveal how highly men thought of themselves and to talk about their contribution and how important it was to society with no thought for women. Valente and Silver (2015) have observed that autobiographical writing or the art of autobiography has been associated with mostly men. There seems to have been no consideration for autobiographical women’s writing.

In tracing the history of autobiography, Smith and Watson (2001) note that Ann Yearsley first coined the word autobiography in the eighteenth century, but it has been erroneously attributed instead to a male Robert Southey. Smith and Watson explain that most of the autobiographical accounts by men focused on success in life and men's careers. They argue that the male autobiographical writers used it as a medium of self-glorification, showing how most of them rose from poverty to riches as seen in the example of Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography published in 1793. The book was void of a record of childhood, personal or family life which most of the female autobiography was pre-occupied with. On the other hand, however, Smith and Watson note that female autobiography was interested in giving a voice, speaking for those who could not speak. It has become crucial to give a voice to women’s writing. One way this can be achieved is when women write and do not cease to write.

The emphasis on male autobiographical writing implies that what is important and worth hearing, and reading is the male life. Suzane Juhasz (2005) notes, “we draw our understanding and perception from experiences of lives deemed useful and important, which is male life and experiences” (p.43). Because of the importance placed on male-dominated preoccupation in early autobiographical writing (like Augustine’s confessions, for example) it has awakened a desire by female writers to redefine the genre. (Gohil,2008). Autobiography has thus become the medium to speak up and reveal women experiences.

6.1 WOMEN AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND POSTCOLONIALISM

Women have used the autobiography genre to express the inner self that has been hidden and unable to speak for centuries. (Gohil, 2008). Women's silence has not been a lack of what to say; instead, it has been a desire to find the right means to be heard and fight being silenced by patriarchal systems. It has become necessary, especially in post-colonial criticism, to recognise and bring women’s writing to the fore. This has become crucial because women’s autobiographical writing and postcolonial writing have evolved due to coming out of subjugation. There is the need to revisit the past to assert a future and denounce practices that have kept them under and denied them a voice (Gohil, 2008). Helene Cixous in her essay “Stories: Out and Out” (1986) argues that it is ‘it is time to invent the ‘other’ story, where woman tell their stories and experiences through their voice and style of writing’ (p.20). This has become essential mostly that women have been neglected in history, seen as appendages, and their writing has been trivial (p.20). This thought has made women rewrite traditional stories and tell personal and individual stories to unearth hidden stories. My writing style is using the creative and the theory to present what has been left as unimportant.

The rise of feminism allowed women to use the medium of writing to tell their story. Female autobiographical writing thus became the medium for the articulation of women

experiences. Autobiographical writing hence gave women the freedom to project feminist assertions while explaining their experiences. This has become very useful for my writing as it aims to tell the 'other story' of the often overlooked, forgotten and neglected stories of women and their experiences at the Jos plateau's tin mines.

My focus is not on women who have been excluded in autobiographical writings. My focus is on women, like the rural Plateau woman who worked the mines and had no voice. This work intends to use the platform that autobiography provides to speak for the neglected and silent experiences of women during and after mining on the Jos Plateau. It is to show the contributions of women at the mining sites. It is most importantly to be a voice to represent the feelings, yearnings, aspirations, dreams and sufferings of women during and after tin mining. Feminist theory becomes a necessary tool to actualise this. The feminist critic Elaine Showalter (1999) explains that feminist theory draws from the past and existing knowledge and writing to produce new and recent contemporary writings that contribute to women writing and feminist criticism.

This type of writing Showalter explains focuses on constructing a female framework for the analysis of women's literature which will help develop new models based on the study of female experience. This will help to focus attention on women's strengths and weaknesses and be able to sympathise, empathise, and appreciate their perspectives. It will also help create a culture of female life and living not defined by male traditions (Showalter, 1979). Showalter explains the importance of highlighting women's writing in her essay *Towards a Feminist Poetics (1979)* using the term "gynocritics". Showalter notes gynocritics not as highlighting the differences between men and female writing but project an understanding of the uniqueness and the specificity of women's writing as a fundamental aspect of female reality. It is through writing as a woman that the peculiarity and concerns of women are

explained. Thus, Showalter's concept has helped stimulate feminist critical thinking and situate this work within feminist thinking.

Showalter also highlights the different waves of feminist criticism of women's autobiography and notes that writers like Estelle Jelinek advocate for the historical, social, psychological and ethnic reading of women's autobiography. Showalter explains that Jenkins notes that men write more on professional lives and success while women focus on personal lived experiences and how they connect to other people. The emphasis on personal lived experiences becomes my focus in this study. I draw on lived experiences to tell the stories and their connection to the people and land. My work highlights stories that affect and engage with human lives. It is through the stories told in this study that these lives become real and authentic. Some of these experiences are peculiar to women whose lives are lived and dictated by society. Most of these feelings are exemplified in the cries, laughter and roles of the women in my stories and poems.

6.2 AS A BLACK FEMALE SUBALTERN WRITER

Spivak (1988) explains that the subaltern is a term used for those perceived to be "of inferior rank", who have no culture, who depend on the coloniser. They are mostly the colonised people who have been convinced that they belong to an inferior class and not fit enough to make a meaningful contribution to society. In responding to this classification type, mainly as found in India, Spivak uses the term 'subaltern'. This term can also be used in a similar case to refer to the Jos Plateau's indigenous inhabitants who had to work on lands that were originally theirs. The people's lands were collected from them, and tax laws were introduced. Since the people could not afford such taxes, they had to work on their original lands, not for personal profit but the colonial authority. Spivak notes that in many of the colonised countries, like Nigeria and India, the native inhabitants were made to believe that the colonial

leaders in the West were better than them. Therefore, it became an issue where the psyche of the people and their land was affected.

Postcolonialism provided the platform for the colonised to speak of their encounters and experiences under colonial regimes, primarily through literature. Postcolonialism becomes even more critical for the subaltern female writer. It provides the opportunity to recollect and connect with what has been lost and try to find a voice for female postcolonial writers**.** This has become a handy tool for me to be able to write about my experiences and that of other women who lived around the mining region and under colonial authority. Writing about these experiences has allowed me to chronicle how women were used in the tin fields over the years and how such experiences have affected them.

Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (2001) notes that "The first step for a colonised people in finding a voice and an identity is to reclaim their past" (p.192). This means the colonised needs to see their past and their culture as having value and to do their possible best to protect that culture. Reclaiming the past involves using memory to remember my experiences and transforming these memories into autobiographical writing. Fanon further notes that apart from reclaiming the past, the next major step for a colonised people in asserting their voice, culture and freedom is to give an accurate representation of who they are as a people and denounce "colonialist ideology by which the past has been devalued" (p.192). Such ideologies have devalued the experiences of the people and their connection to their land. These kinds of narratives give a false representation of the land's significance and give an inaccurate picture of the people's suffering.

Therefore, it is in light of the need to bring the past to the present and give an accurate picture of my experiences and other women during the tin mining era and its aftermath that feminist criticism and postcolonial criticism share a common similarity. I am a

female writer who uses the tool of memory to evoke the past to construct a narrative for myself, my people, and my environment.

If the colonised found it challenging to speak and be heard during the colonial period, it was even more difficult for the woman subaltern female to speak. Spivak notes that “the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the shadow (Spivak, 287). She makes such statements stemming from the fact that in India, under ‘sati rule’, the woman is seen and not heard, she finds her existence through her husband. Spivak challenges the style of rule in her essay, *can the subaltern speak*? She uses the example of the widow in the *Sati* system in India, where the woman is masked behind her husband.

Although we did not have *sati* in Nigeria, we had a male dominance culture, which was perhaps encouraged by colonialism’s inherent patriarchal structure. Similarly, just as the Indian woman under the *sati* was treated less than the man, the Jos woman was regarded as subject to her husband’s wishes and desire. I refer to this treatment in the short stories ‘Helima’ and ‘the house at Diye’. This trend has continued till this day, where the plateau woman sees it as her duty to work hard and provide for the family (Dalyop, 2018). We can infer from the above examples to suggest that women's treatment as less than men or dependent on men seems to be a common experience for some women in the global south.

It might be argued that although societies like Nigeria and India did not consider or give women a voice, it does not mean the women did not have a voice from within. They had a voice that was stifled by patriarchal and colonial policies. In India's case by Hindu religious practice of *sati*, in Nigeria, by both male and colonial practice who did not value what the women did compared to what their male counterparts did. As Spivak notes, “the silence of the female as subaltern is the result of a failure of interpretation and not a failure of

articulation" (p.142). Spivak notes that women can speak if given a chance. She notes "the subalterns" were subjected to colonial rule, and only the coloniser had the voice.

Therefore, it is the desire to speak and be heard that the relevance of the postcolonial theory to my work becomes suitable. Even though the subaltern writings tried to speak and counter colonial ideology and narratives by writers like Achebe, Emecheta, and Adichie of Nigeria and V.S Naipaul of India among others, it was much more difficult for the woman whose voice is still muffled and is seeking for an audience to listen (Spivak, 143). It has become pertinent to use Spivak's theory – especially that the subaltern can be male, or female has been categorized based on gender, class, creed and race (p. 11). Therefore, the desire to speak up and remove limitations will always provide the need for the subaltern to speak (Spivak 144).

What I aim to achieve with the creative pieces in this thesis is to reveal stories that have been hidden or have not been adequately represented in narratives about tin mining on the Plateau. It seeks to be a voice for the marginalized, mostly women and children.

6.3 AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND BLACK WOMEN WRITING

In *Black Women writing Autobiography* (2005), Meta Harris notes that Autobiography, especially by black people in America, started as a form of slave narration to counter negative representation of black people. It was a way through which black slaves chronicled their experiences and found an escape from their oppression. These accounts were written to advocate that black slaves were humans, capable of thinking, and having a culture and tradition. Therefore, Autobiography became a useful medium to give an accurate representation of black people but most especially black women. Autobiographical writing has become critical as literary depictions of black women often drew from stereotypes that

black women experience. Some of these include the Mammy, who is a faithful and obedient, servant; the welfare mother, who is impoverished and depends on the welfare system; the Jezebel, who is an oversexualized woman; the matriarch, who is an aggressive and bad Black mother; and Sapphire, the angry Black woman'(Kilgore et al., 2020, p.372). These disturbing stereotypes necessitated a need for black women to reject these discourses and begin writing about themselves, their struggles and their challenges.

With the advent of the feminist movement, a lot more women began to write autobiographies. The feminist movement, therefore, helped to produce autobiographical writings by women. It also helped encourage women to break "their million-year silence" (Harris, p. 15). It showed how to break this silence and "peel off every veil" (p.15) of inaccurate representation of women and women writing. Besides, the feminist movement helped to create awareness and consciousness in women, especially after the 1970s. The reason for this was mainly that most writings before then were male dominated.

The telling of lived experiences has become necessary as the medium of autobiographical writing brings out the person's inner personality (Harris, 2005). Harris further opines that through autobiography, the power to redefine self and identity is placed in the writer's hands who can give an authentic representation. However, this power has not always been there. The lack of accurate representation has been that there were not many women who wrote an autobiography.

Very few women wrote autobiography perhaps because of the silence culture, where the woman, like the black American woman, was already placed in a stereotyped narrative. This narrative about few women writing on autobiography is also a similar phenomenon on the African continent, especially the Nigerian nation. There are not many female autobiographical writers in Nigeria. The few, like Buchi Emecheta (*Second class citizen,*

1972*)*, Flora Nwapa (*Efuru,1966*) and Chimamanda Adichie, come from the eastern region of Nigeria. Adichie has written an autobiographical account of the Biafran war history in her book, *Half of a Yellow Sun (2006).* Female writers like Emecheta wrote about her marriage struggle, while Nwapa wrote about her ordeal in a childless marriage. Other autobiographical accounts come from women from the southern part of Nigeria. These writings include Toyin Falola and Vivek Bahl's poetry collections (*Scoundrels of Deferral*, 2006); Toyin Falola and Aderonke Adesanya's (*Etches on Fresh Waters*, 2008). These female writers have written from their personal experiences and mainly of their people and communities in Nigeria's southern and eastern parts.

However, there is a lack of autobiographical voices in Nigeria's north-central region, where I come from. In the first edition of the international journal, *Women in Mining*, (March 2010) the only example used for mining communities where women have worked the mines or have been affected by mining in Nigeria is the Niger Delta. The Jos region, which still has mining ponds, is not included. Such is the story of the Jos region when environmental mining is referred to in Nigeria. Perhaps the culture, tradition, and religion, especially in the north, encourage this silence. Therefore, I provide an original insight into mining, hoping that using my voice here would help break this circle that has kept northern Nigerian women mute in autobiographical writing.

Therefore, what autobiography allows me to do is to use the power of autobiographical writing to explain women's lives and experiences, especially during the tin mining period and in the aftermath of such. The need to use these narratives to show women's contribution to the tin mines, their experiences and suffering has become necessary. The story about the tin on the Plateau cannot be complete without the story of the women who worked the mines. The discovery of tin is what has shaped our past, our present and our future. The *Women in Mining* journal (2010) notes that mining has been carried out by men and women

for a long time, since the nineteenth century. In some communities, it occurred on a large scale and often involved men and women. Although women have been involved in mining, the voice often heard is what men have achieved on the tin fields. Women's feelings, experiences during and after mining has not been adequately captured in writing about mining (particularly tin mining).

The journal, *Women in Mining* (2010 edition), further notes a group of women were sourced from different mining communities to share their experiences as individuals. These women established that women's voices or perspectives regarding mining are often not heard of in the media, political sphere, or policy development forums. These women allude to the fact that the familiar voice is that of men who have become the community's voices. Consequently, there is the need to create awareness of the challenges and struggles experienced by women in such places where companies extract wealth from the depths of the earth as was the Jos Plateau case.

Besides, Harris (2005) notes that autobiographical writing gave her a chance to vent her anger against things she did not like. Harris explained that through autobiographical writing, she could free herself from narratives that held her down. She used her writing to project who she was, where she was coming from, and her experiences. She recounts that "It was a way of letting off steam. In my writing, I was able to let go of some of the animosity that was keeping me from moving away from the unwarranted depictions that held me in a place that did not reflect who I am" (p. 4). As black female writers, Harris, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker used writing to correct the negative notions to free themselves and celebrate being black women writers. It became apparent that I could use writing to counter negative impressions and silenced voices and experiences. Thus, for me, one way to counter negative impressions is through autobiographical writing- I owe the Jos woman and

her people to create awareness about the narrative given, which has not accurately reflected who the women of the region are.

In the few instances in Nigeria where there have been autobiographical stories, it is from the point of personal reflections as mentioned earlier. Not many have women in Nigeria have written on lived experiences in the environment. The few writings on environmental degradation, like Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow (2006)* are on women experiences of the Niger Delta not on the Jos region – my region of focus. Harris (2005) further notes that in recent times the art of autobiographical writing has become a handy tool in helping the 'scholarly investigation of a people's tradition and culture' (p.57) Autobiography is a useful medium in helping in the study and discovery of other people and their cultures.

What about history one might ask? History gives you an overview in most cases. The successes of white, European men are foregrounded, and the violence and oppression elicited by them against women and native peoples are erased. Nevertheless, in autobiography salient themes and issues are read and understood, primarily through experiential narratives and lived experiences. Harris notes further that black female writers are beginning to use the medium of Autobiography as an authentic way to share their knowledge and experience, for the growth of knowledge of themselves and others and for sharing their experience with others and creating awareness. I hope through my poems and short stories to achieve this.

6.4 THE FEMALE, AND LAND INVASION

This section of the thesis attempts to show, using the metaphor of rape, the devastating effects of tin mining on the Jos environment. I am juxtaposing environmental degradation and rape, where I liken the degrading of the land to the violent act of rape. I acknowledge that the subject of rape is a contested topic that is not commonly discussed. Moniza Alvi (2010) notes

that talking about rape is like a taboo, a subject that is forbidden to talk or write about. In addition, Alvi notes that while the subject of war is considered a universal topic, rape is regarded as an issue that concerns only its victims. It is still a topic that is treated as not safe and acceptable even in contemporary time. According to Susan Brown Miller (1975), rape is a deliberate act to intimidate and keep the victim in a powerless state. This implies that using the metaphor of rape to explain land degradation connotes the land has been subjected to a state of defencelessness and a state of surrender. I acknowledge that using rape as a metaphor for land devastation can be contested, as it is not as violent as the human act, but for the land, it is (a violent act, that if it were human, and could speak, would be). Although others view and see rape as problematic, for me, it is the problem- the scale of devastation is what I attempt to reveal using rape as a metaphor.

The land on the Jos Plateau had no choice as it was ploughed into to extract tin. The residue of deep holes and gullies can be likened to the rape of the land. Using rape as a metaphor is not about telling the story of women; it is about using the concept of rape to negotiate the connection between human actions and authority. This is the approach I intend to adopt. It is not just about the story of rape; it is also about colonialism and oppression; it is about unearthing and revealing often neglected and silent experiences. It is a way of speaking up for the voiceless. It is about a female, telling a story from a feminine perspective.

This has become necessary as Anderson (1995)) notes, that feminist epistemology focuses on how gender challenges concepts of knowledge. It pays attention to the incomplete narratives that have been passed on.

Consequently, the feminist concept has become useful for me as it focuses on disadvantaged women, and other minority groups who are often neglected. The concept gives these neglected groups a voice and seeks to attend to their interest. The interest in this work

lies in the fact that I attempt through my stories and poems to project the contribution that women on the Jos Plateau have made to the tin mining industry. As before now, their impact has been unnoticed.

In addition, feminist epistemology looks for ways in which dominant groups or notions have given alternative narratives that negate and silence such groups. The women on the Jos plateau have been projected as just “helpers” and not the leading players on the tin fields. Meanwhile, Alahira (2014) noted that women received lower wages than men, even though they performed the same labour. In some cases, the women worked a great deal as they had to work on the farms and then return home to perform domestic labour. Also, the women did not only cook and provide for the men on the tin mines but also took care of the family while the men were away (Alahira, 2014; Danfulani & Fwatshak, 2002). However, most of the narrative about tin mining has often neglected revealing women’s contributions. What I am doing in this work is not just telling individual stories but creating a voice for women and the land. The use of rape as a metaphor for land degradation is a form of rejecting patriarchal notions and colonialism. I am using it to underpin authority (mainly patriarchal on how women were treated at the tin mines during the tin mining period). These writings will open possibilities for a better understanding and appreciation of the effort by women during tin mining.

The concept of situated knowledge has been instrumental to the motivation for this work. Speaking as a woman and using land metaphorically as body allows me to articulate silenced experiences, more than traditional writing would. Creative writing enables me to delve in and give a feminist epistemological account of tin mining's effect on the inhabitants (mostly women, children, plants and animals). This has become vital because as a woman, who has lived in this region, I have a personal account and experience. My interest stems from the fact that women's contribution to the tin industry, the effect it had on them and their

children during and after the mining period has not been fully and accurately captured in tin mining literature.

I have lived and grown up on the Jos Plateau. Most of the accounts on tin mining have been written by men and from the viewpoint (in some cases) of mining contributions to the Nigerian economy. There are little or no accounts from women writing about tin mining or their roles in boosting the mining industry on the Jos Plateau. I have seen how the narrative about women serving as sex slaves during the mining era has continued to be used against women, especially the Berom women. These women worked at the mines while providing and taking care of the family when the men were at the minefields. However, instead of celebrating this effort by women, they are regarded as promiscuous. Therefore, my creative work is enabling me to speak for these silent and marginalised voices.

As mentioned earlier, colonialism brought about the distortion of indigenous tradition and culture in most colonised societies like the Jos Plateau. As a result, a binary classification based on gender, culture and class gradually crept into the fabric of the colonised. I grew up being told that women who worked on the tin mines were prostitutes. They were regarded as 'loose women' since some of them had served the sexual pleasures of the colonial masters. Alahira (2014) notes that the female tin mine workers were exposed to beer brewing, prostitution and gambling. The men indulged in drunk drinking, womanizing, and idling away, however, they were not stigmatised or looked down upon. It is the women that are criticized. For the men, time at the mines meant more money to pay their taxes and indulge in taking some bottles for pleasure.

Edward Said (2014), notes that "imperialism was an act of geographical violence where lands were explored and brought under control" (p.2). These lands were controlled by colonialists who claim to have brought civilisation and therefore, should be considered

superior and given the power to rule**.** The colonised is robbed of agency as seen in the example of the 'mirror and lipstick' in the poem ‘He lured me’ where these tiny objects were given in exchange for access into the woman's/ land's inner being. The need for a voice has become pertinent as the female body's representation falls into the categorisation where the female is considered weak and inferior. Moreover, as Higgins and Silver (1991) note, it is necessary to voice out and speak about what has often been neglected: the violation against the environment and women who find ways to speak about this violation (Higgins & Silver, 1991).

While the Jos environment has been physically violated through tin mining, I have chosen poetry and short stories as the medium to express the seldom-discussed issue, of the effect of tin mining on the land and its inhabitants. I have chosen poetry as a valuable art because: poetry can give life and meaning to lived experiences **(**Gunne, Thompson and Brigley,2010). Poetry can explore the human worlds using the power of words. Moniza Alvi (2010) observed that although poetry can be written on any subject, the subject of rape has become essential as it is an experience that affects everyone. Although rape is not a subject often discussed in public spheres, the invasion of one’s private life has become a matter of public discourse, especially since it causes pain**.** Gunne et al. (2010) note that poetry has the capacity for penetrating and bringing memory to fore on such a personal yet public issue that affects human life and living. I use the power of such subtle yet strong words that poetry provides to unearth buried truths about the tin mining situation on the Jos plateau. I have also chosen short stories and poems to convey the devastation of the environment in different perspectives.

The similarities between sexual violence and environmental degradation refer to the period before discovering tin and before the virginity of the female persona was taken away. The metaphor of rape against the woman's desire and taking advantage of her naivety is used

to denote ecological degradation and injustice done to the environment and the persona in the poem. Dorothy Dinnerstein (qtd in Berman 2010) notes that the woman, like the Jos land, is 'a natural resource, an asset to be owned, harnessed and harvested. There is little or no feeling if she exists, and there is little effort in ensuring her preservation or survival' (Berman 263).

Susan Brown Miller notes**,** rape is the dynamic control, the overpowering of a powerless victim (p.11). In this case, that victim is the Jos environment that was plundered and dug. In addition, Susan Bewley (2011), explains that "Rape is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation as it keeps its victims in a state of fear" (P.7). For the tin mining region residents, what has kept the people in fear is the deep death holes surrounding their homes. The fear of losing a child, family member or animal into such deep holes has continued to live with them.

The earth is mostly regarded as a sacred being, like a goddess, a deity to be revered, especially among the Berom and Angas. It is like a mother that protects and provides for its young. I had such a similar feeling of nurturing and protection when I was with my mother. I, however, like the land, lost this bond when I was taken away from my mother. While with my mother, and being her last child, I was given the freedom to do whatever I wanted. It was the age of innocence, where I knew very little about the danger that lurked in the ponds around me as a child. This age can also be likened to how the Jos environment was before colonialism where the people were mainly farmers, and there were no ponds or contaminated soil. I use my personal life story in parallel with the political tin mining saga. Carolyn Merchant in *Death of Nature* (1980) notes that the motherly, nurturing and preserving role that mother nature was endowed with, ceased to exist at the advent of modernity. The innocence I had with my mother was lost when I came to live in the city of tin. While in the village, I played wherever I wanted and only came home when the sun was tired of opening

her eyes. I was oblivious of ponds or deep holes. Mother did not have to live in the fear that I would fall into one of the holes.

Similarly, the Jos environment and its inhabitants lived enjoying the protection of mother nature before tin mining. Robin Kimmerer (2013) explains that to enjoy the benefit of mother nature, we need to work together in harmony with the earth. Kimmerer likens the relationship with the earth, to the braiding of sweetgrass, where it is better when someone else holds the other end of the braid. When we treat earth kindly, we get the best out of her and enjoy the protection and healing she offers. This protection is like the protection Gaia had been giving the earth as told in Greek mythology. Therefore, the earth's connection to the feminine body indicates that the ecological degradation and crisis that the earth is plagued with can be portrayed as the abuse, violation of the earth.

I grew up as a shy child. I was taken from my mother's wings at six to live with my older sister. The freedom to play and go anywhere I wanted to (like the Jos environment before colonialism) came to an end one Saturday afternoon. The moment I saw my sister's car coming down the newly tarred road from the city, I knew my future had been decided in my absence. I became like the Jos environment at the colonialists' coming, where farmlands were replaced with mining holes. The once sacred lands became desecrated as no one could protect me, or the land, anymore.

I lived in a fenced house in the city, which had a gate and some cactus plants at the entrance. As a child back in the village, I presumed that any person living in a fenced house must be wealthy. I thought the sign of affluence was having a car and living in a fenced house. However, I soon discovered the reason for the fence, especially around where we lived. I had to stay indoors to stay safe — no time for play or pranks. The city had deep holes and was a 'no-go' area for a child who was used to playing whenever and wherever I wanted.

This freedom was halted as we lived in a town full of water bodies that housed spirits. The fact that I could not play made me upset and quiet. I chose to remain silent and seldom spoke. My silence was perhaps in protest of the snatching of my childhood.

While writing the poems, 'I swear I was a virgin', 'He lured me', and 'Rape of the land', so many questions came to mind. Thoughts about using the sexual act as a metaphor for land degradation were challenging, mainly because I was not comfortable speaking about it. However, the poems were some of the best examples I could think about to convey my thoughts. Poetry became, for me, a powerful medium with the capacity to use words to convey feelings. Hence, poetry helps convey the subject of rape- which is a taboo topic often not talked. Through the poems, I can talk and describe the act of rape (albeit metaphorically in connection to land rape) to convey the depth of action and meaning.

In agreeing to this summation by Ali, Riki Wilkins argues that "gender is involved with meaning and symbols - associated with classifications of privileges, punishment as used for power and sexuality, masculinity and feminist, dominant and weakness" (p.28). Wilkins notes that writing has been classified as a gender to more dominant, valued, and supported forms of writing against other marginalised types. An example of this classification is like the Jos tin mining effect, which has been placed of less importance to the oil degradation of the Niger Delta region. Therefore, just as gender is based on use, perception and culture, writing is considered a genre**.**

Ali explains further that genre like gender can be likened as the body of work. Poetry helps me bring ideas in my head into a body, give it life and make it real. Just as gender is restrained by sexual energy, poetry allows thoughts and ideas to manifest and find expression. Ali explains that writing is a way of thinking and gives space for desire- a new narration. Poetry takes on the intensity of the moment to create life.

6.5 AGAINST DEFILEMENT AS METAPHOR

Sherry B. Ortner, in the article "*Is female to male as nature to culture*?' (1974) quoted in Berman (2010), notes that most women are oppressed in their communities because of their symbolic connection to nature. She explains women become passive and at the receiving end. They are the ones that are being plundered and dug. Early ecofeminism agreed with the analogy of the abuse of women and the abuse of the environment. They make a case for the comparison, and juxtaposition as both are actions carried out against the helpless. Just as the woman is helpless before the rapist, so is the land helpless before the miner. Cuomo and Ortner (quoted in Berman, 2010) note that the rationalisation and connotation of the female and the earth only give room for further oppression of the patriarchy which places the woman as passive, flat and powerless, like a mat to be trampled upon. Nevertheless, later ecofeminists do not subscribe to such connection between rape and mother nature, as it connotes passivity.

Tzeporah Berman (2006) has argued that using the metaphor of rape tends to make the violence against women the "absent referent". Therefore, Berman (2010) argues that using the metaphor of rape to demonstrate the exploitation of nature/earth: negates the force of the reality of the experience endured by women. Nevertheless, this is not my aim of using this metaphor. I tend to advocate for the connection between land degradation and rape, as an act that the earth is helpless and cannot talk. I am attempting to give it a voice through my writing. Therefore, the metaphor has proven productive for my creative practice as it has enabled my poetry and short story to give voice to marginalised positions.

6.6 CONTEXT FOR LAND AND BODY VIOLATION

Jody Freeman, in the article, *The Disciplinary Function of Rapes Representation (1993)* explains that representation involves the different ways that reality is presented. Consequently, a critical portrayal of the issue of rape would revolve around how society sees women, whether as subservient or subordinate. This sometimes questions and queries established norms on women, sexuality and rape. These can be difficult issues to talk about, especially from my perspective as an African woman, particularly as tradition abhors such talk, especially in the public domain. There is, therefore, something powerfully subversive in my voicing out these issues.

The poems and short stories are written from my perspective as a female (a plateau woman who like the land had no say over her body). The creative works reveal the powerlessness of the conquered territories to fight the colonial master when they came to the Jos Plateau searching for tin. Just as the land was passive and could not fight and resist, so was the woman who had to endure being raped. They present examples of a passive land and a passive woman (not that the woman could not fight, but society had subjected her to passivity status). Rape, therefore, became a product of power. To counter such ideology would take some inner strength (not physical strength but from within.) Freeman explains; therefore, that rape goes beyond an act of physical violence to serve as a basis for which power and authority are exercised. Using the power of words through creative writing which I have employed here, becomes an act of conquest- politically and physically.

My study aims to raise consciousness about the treatment of conquered territories and women. It involves sharing my personal experience and that of others, especially women. Some of the stories and experiences shared are experiences that some women (especially during colonialism and in developing countries) can identify with. However, in the poems, I

am not telling the story of an actual individual woman who has experienced rape. Instead, I have created a representative event to stand for the possible experiences of many women. The stories and poems will serve as a basis to investigate the effect of tin mining on the land and women and help draw attention to this. It is not just telling personal stories but of collective stories and experiences that reveal some common issues of women's lives. It is hoped the creative material would add to a new understanding of women's experiences, especially during mining.

6.7 PLATEAU WOMEN AND THE JOS TIN MINES

This work can also be considered under the feminist epistemology of philosophy where women have been silenced in historical accounts and records. Elizabeth Anderson (1995) explains that the Feminist epistemology and philosophy of science studies the various ways in which different concepts have been presented to justify women's unjust treatment in society. These various thoughts, concepts and practices have led to undermining women's contribution to society. In the isolated instances where women's contributions are acknowledged, such contributions are placed as lower than that of men or *placed in the interest of men,* thereby making contributions unimportant or invisible. These concepts make way for gender discrepancies in society, which has become detrimental to women's contributions to societal growth. As a result, the feminist epistemology queries why such has been allowed to thrive. Such imbalance against women has been a subject of discourse from Cixous to Miller as highlighted above.

The non-inclusion and undocumented data on women participation or provision of structure that caters to women's needs is a phenomenon that has often been neglected. Caroline Cariado Perez in her book, *Invisible women,* (2019) presents a list of the evidence and data that expose some of these gender prejudice. An example of a gender-based prejudice

reported by the Guardian press (2019) is the recent debate about gender pay imbalance in a global organization such as the BBC. Sesko and Barnet (2018) note that the common examples of prejudice and discrimination are mostly associated with focus on White women who are regarded as targets of sexism and Black men as the targets of racism. They explain that the stereotype for "Black" tend to be Black men, not Black women. While typical representations of "women" tend to be White women rather than Black women". (p.1). As a result, Black women do not often get featured in this categorization.

Consequently, the exclusion of women on the Jos tin fields is no exception to this feminine exclusion trend. There is little mention of the contribution of women on tin mining. Alahira (2014) observes that data available on women's participation during the colonial mining sites on the Jos plateau is insignificant. Women's role has been left out even though women participated in the mining site. Additionally, women were also employed as cooks on such sites. Apart from working the mines, these women were also responsible for, managing household tasks while their men went to the tin sites.

Alahira (2014) notes that women participated directly and indirectly to the tin workers' production and sustenance at the mines in Jos. Women were responsible for moving raw tin from the site to the river to wash off unwanted material. Besides, they also engaged in chopping wood to produce fire to make food for the tin mine workers. Despite women's efforts in ensuring the men were taken care of at the site, they were paid less than their male counterparts. With the discovery of tin, more roles were added to the women in the region. These women had to feed their family and work at the mines to provide for their families. For long, women have been denied the right to be celebrated. Julia Kristeva (1996) emphasized that women's radical difference from men be acknowledged and demanded women's rights to remain outside the linear time of history and politics.

Few women on the Jos Plateau like Moyen Adiukwu-Brown, have written about how radioactive elements from the Jos tin deposits have made the region prone to a higher radiation concentration. In a study conducted by Adiuku-Brown and Dalyop Dung (2011), they observed that because of the high levels of radioactive elements in the mining region, residents of such areas have congenital disabilities, skin cancer and hepatitis. Also, Hannatu Wazo (2017), highlighted the introduction of land reclamation methods to sustain the already lost ground and avert further damage to the environment. Wazo's emphasis was more on reclamation methods for the environment and did not project the plight/interest of women and their involvement in the tin fields. Although both women have written about tin mining and its devastating effect on the environment, they have not included the participation of women on the tin fields. I draw on their writing and experience, on tin mining and its effect on the Jos plateau to include women and their contribution to the tin industry. The women writers above provided the platform for me to lend my voice to the discourse on tin mining degradation in the area.

In response to this neglected and subjective viewpoint in writing, I adopt *L'ecriture feminine*, which goes beyond just writing about the female experience. The French feminist poet and writer, Hélène Hélène Cixous explains that *L'ecriture feminine* serves as "a disruptive and deconstructive force, shaking the security and stability of the phallogocentric Symbolic Order, and therefore allowing more play—in gender, writing, and sexuality—for all language-using subjects" (qtd in Mary Klages, 2012, p.12). The desire to disrupt this long-existing male writing dominance and women's portrayal on the Jos tin fields has contributed to writing my creative pieces.

I draw inspiration from Madeline Miller because as a contemporary writer, she inspires me with her approach to retelling myths, as seen in her book *Circe*. As a result, I have translocated her retelling of western myth into the account of my own culture's

mythology from the feminine perspective. I use the metaphor of the goddess in 'she came in anger' and the goddess *Nanchen* in 'As Oyinbo Come' to write about the pain and pains of the land and the discomfort women endured during mining. Because very few incidences are captured of women's contribution to the tin mines, it has become crucial to give women a voice. Miller suggests that was one of the reasons, she gave female characters Medea and Circe, room to meet in her retelling of the mythical story. This is notable mainly because the account in the traditional myth does not record this meeting. As such, choosing to give time and space to represent this meeting is a deliberate choice by Miller to make the reader engage with the traditionally feared and hated female character Medea, (who kills her children). Although Medea is portrayed as full of anger, bitterness, and jealousy, Miller explains she deliberately chose to give her characters a voice and roles for their contribution to Greek mythology and not just part of their male counterparts' narratives.

The female persona has been under attack for so long as even goddesses have suffered the same fate as in Greek mythology as mentioned earlier. Cixous frowns at such misrepresentations of the feminine gender in ancient (Greece, German, France and Egypt) stories like ‘Sleeping Beauty’ where the woman lies helpless and dead. The only hope for her to come alive is the kiss from a man. The woman is awakened to continue to fulfil his desire and pleasure. Cixous further frowns at this depiction in other fairy-tale stories like ‘Snow-white’ and ‘Cinderella’. Again, the woman’s survival is hinged on the man’s bravery and prowess, ultimately fulfilling his desire. Cixous notes that women are often linked with being passive and having no strength of their own. The woman is almost non-existent; she is either passive or does not exist. Kinship structure, family hierarchy is linked to the men. This categorisation can be likened to the Plateau women who have become non-existent in writings about tin mining history.

In Cixous's essay, "*Sorties*" on using the bed, as a symbol of passivity, the woman is projected in the stories "Sleeping beauty and Snow white' as helpless beauties, sleeping and waiting for her prince charming to wake her up (p.66). Such feminine conceptualisation has affected how women are viewed even in contemporary times (like women's passivity and tin mining history in Jos). Cixous calls on women to wake up from the dangers of sleeping (like the fairy princess in beauty and the beast) and being silent, to begin to voice out like I am doing, to talk about the value women added to the tin mining history. Cixous's call has become necessary, especially as the phallocentric order has denied the woman the expression of her voice or body. Cixous encourages women to write to counter the stereotypical world in which patriarchal societies have placed women.

In agreeing with the concept of *L'ecriture feminine,* Cixous admonishes "Women must write herself, must write about women and bring women to writing from which they have been driven away from their bodies" (Cixous, 1976, p.16). The call for women to rise (from the beds they have been confined to) is what Showalter explains "…as the inscription of the feminine body and female difference in language and text" (Davey,2013, p.7). Against this stereotype, Cixous admonishes women to write to counter patriarchal stereotypes and phallocentric discourses about women.

Narratives that have negated and silenced women's contributions to tin mining have been subject to this phallocentric view. Their involvement has been silent like the fairy tale women in "Beauty and the Beast" who is a passive woman lying down to be awakened by a man. The need to counter this atypical narrative through documenting and writing about women and their experiences on the Jos tin fields is one way to give the Jos woman a voice. *L'ecriture feminine,* according to Cixous, enables women and gives access to our inner self, being and express our hidden creativity (Davey, 2013). The expression of this creativity is

what practice as research has given me the privilege to do. To dream, imagine, and write to free the silent voice and personality of the Jos woman.

6.8 CONCLUSION

Seamus Heaney, in his poem “Act of Union” (1975) (quoted in Spitzer Hanks,2020) equates the violation of the land to the violation of the woman. He uses the woman’s body as landscape, which is like what I have done in “Dark Night” to decry colonialism and imperial subjugation. Whilst Seamus focused on Ireland; I focus on the Jos environment. In addition to the symbolic use of land mining to rape, Alexander Cordell in his book, *Rape of the Fair Country* (1959) reveals the situation of the Welsh coal communities and explores the involvement of women and children at the mines. Cordell frowns at exploring the land forcefully, especially by the Ironmasters.

Similarly, I frown at the exploitation of women and children on the Jos tin mines in some stories in this work. Using the land as a metaphor has drawn criticism from feminists like Dale Spender, Mary Dale, Dorothy Smith (Berman, 2010) who presume it means the woman is projected as powerless, subdued and cannot talk or fight back. They query Heaney’s dehumanisation of the woman who is referred to as open ground. They claim it is more of glorifying and giving power to the man who is the perpetrator of the rape. However, this is not what I hope I projected with the topic of rape. I use the metaphor of rape to reveal the extent of damage and degradation in the Jos environment.

CHAPTER 7 – CRITICAL AND CREATIVE CONNECTION OF THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF TIN MINING ON THE JOS PLATEAU

7.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores poetic language use to reveal the devastation caused by tin mining on the land and inhabitants of the Jos plateau. In this case, poetic language involves the use of metaphors, imagery in explaining environmental issues on the Plateau. The use of poetic language has become necessary because it clarifies and fills the gaps and boundaries that scientific writing creates. It has become essential to connect the relevance of creative writing to scientific discourse. Joeres and Mittman (1993) observe that the novel, short story or poem enables the reader to live in the experience and reality of the world he has read about. The use of the creative writing genre can evoke all the sensory feelings in the reader's mind and transports the reader to the “world of reality” as presented in a poem or short story (p.3).

Furthermore, on the importance of creative writing in understanding scientific writing, Joeres and Mittman explain that scientific writing alone is not enough. Because conventional writing, by its form, can restrict imagination, which creative writing allows. In this section, creative writing gives room for imagination and the ability to belong, feel, taste, and experience the imaginary world. Thus, through the short stories and poems in this section and the entire thesis, the Jos region's land and inhabitants' experiences can be imagined and felt by the reader.

In addition to talking about the limitations of the essay, T.W. Adorno, (1984) opines that “conventional academic writing is interested in (restricted to) philosophical writings that are embellished and dressed in universal nobility” (p.32). Such writings conform to already prescribed models and dogma with no room for objectivity or creativity. As a result, such

writings are not interested (do not present) in peculiar experiences such as creative writing about the Jos Plateau environment.

While extolling the relevance of poetry to academic writing, the creative writer Kazim Ali (2013) as earlier mentioned posits that “If writing is a way of thinking, the poem itself offers the best form of structure. It invents its own rules under the making. Neither line, nor form, nor diction or syntax is taken for granted by the writer. It is an anarchic piece of text that lives between boundaries” (p. 27). Poetic writing can elicit sympathy, emotions and give understanding to what scientific data presents. Gillian Byrne (2017) has argued that the poetic form permits the addition of different voices and stories in a “non-hierarchical manner, making the author's influence explicit without it being dominant” (p.1). Therefore, the presentation of data in poetic form gives more profound insight.

Besides, this section combines scientific evidence and poetic language to give a better understanding of this devastation. The Australian poet Kevin Brophy asserts that "creativity in language can enhance the communication of thought and perspective in a scholarly PhD". (Brophy, 2007, p.1**).** Therefore, poetry becomes a useful tool to “evoke the participants’ experience whilst making the author's influence explicit;” (p1). As a result, poetry becomes the most appropriate tool that “can be utilized to provide a fuller representation of the research, placing the participants' voice, the researcher and the literature on an equal level within the whole story of the research project.” (P.1). This has become true in my experience as some of the poems reveal the level of loss and in the voices of the inhabitants and the environment.

Furthermore, Michael Erben (1998) notes that imagination fills the gaps scientific research cannot fulfil. Poetic imagination or creative works (like the short stories and poems in this work) like reading the story of the death of the young man in one of the ponds help

develop an accessible understanding of the data that science offers on tin mining in Plateau state. Kazim Ali further explains that theory and art are intertwined because our ideas and imaginations are everything we have. These creative imaginations become physical from the words, imagery, and language used (Ali, 2013). In this case, poetic language can better reveal both the poet's experience and other characters in the written pieces.

7.1. LOSS OF PLANTS AND SOIL DEGRADATION

Moreover, this chapter acknowledges the scientific evidence of the loss of indigenous plants and exposure to radiation and diseases by consuming foods grown and exposed to the contamination in the region. Engaging my reader in the emotional experience makes it "real" in human terms, in a way that scientific data may not. Walker & Singer (2013) note that "a poem, with its line breaks, lyrical language, emphasis on image, etc. may well be as fact-based as any historical or newspaper account"(P.4) Poetry provides me with the opportunity to blend scientific research and present it in poetic language. I use my writing as a way of engaging my reader in the emotional experience. By doing this, the emotional experience makes it "real" in human terms, in a way that scientific data may not, which is a way of generating impact with my research. I write to counter the categorization against science and art as boundaries that cannot be connected. Instead, I write against these boundaries and show through poetry the connection between scientific evidence and poetic imagination.

My creative recreation of the effect of tin mining on the Jos Plateau helps to give a holistic understanding of the scientific data given. The characters involved in the after effect of tin mining (like land, plants, animals, and humans) have been given form, shape and a voice in my creative pieces. This further highlights the importance of poetry as Ingold quoted in Vannini (2015) notes that: "But the fact that word-craft of this kind has been hived off, to a restricted domain known as poetry, is indicative of where the problem lies. If writing

had not lost its soul, then what need would we have for poetry?" (p. 8). Therefore, poetry restores the link between words and humanity, making it easier for the reader to empathise through the lives of the characters. I draw on personal experience to explain the loss of plants that served as medicine while growing up as a young girl and how they have gradually faded as the soil has become contaminated as shown from scientific evidence.

7.2 LOSS OF FARMING OCCUPATION

In the section below, I give an overview of the academic literature available on tin mining on the Plateau. I discuss how my creative work interfaces with the literature to illuminate the lived experiences of the inhabitants of the region as affected by the facts reported in the literature. Before discovering tin on the Jos plateau, in 1902, the inhabitants were mostly farmers and hunters. Freund (1981) in quoting Hodder (1959) notes there were reports of the indigenous people "cutting and carrying wood and clearing the ground for farming" (p.113). The statement suggests that the native inhabitants were known to be farmers. However, with the introduction of mining, large portions of lands meant for farming were acquired for mining, as such, farmlands became limited. Adegboye (2012) observes that soils in the area exposed to mining resulted in low agricultural yield. As a result, food production was affected when 40% of farmland was lost to tin mining. Therefore, tin mining contributed mainly to altering the environmental and socio-economic landscape on the Jos Plateau.

Ndace Jiya and Haruna Danladi (2012) note that tin mining has led to a decline in "biological diversity and has made some plants and animals common to that area extinct." (151). Citing the United Nation Food and Agricultural Organization report, they note further that about 500 million acres of land in developing countries like Nigeria have been lost due to deforestation connected to the clearing of ground for mining activities. The loss of fertile land is because most of the forest cleared for agriculture is not sustainable as the nutrients in such

soil have lost their potency to human-induced activities like tin mining. Besides, such sites became prone to erosion and caused a reduction in arable land for production.

As stated earlier, the discovery of tin suddenly brought the state to prominence, mostly as tin was an essential commodity during the 1st World War. The demand for tin in producing engine parts used in conveying British soldiers to and from the war front meant many land and communities on the Jos Plateau were exploited to produce tin. As a result, these extractions were done without consideration for the long-term effects on the land. Ndace Jiya and Haruna (2012) note that plants have been deprived of their natural habitat in addition to deforestation. The reason for this displacing is because the soil around the mining area has lost its fertility. This has led to the gradual loss of plants that once served as medicine found in such areas.

My own experience as a child growing up in this region gives a specific example of this loss's effects. As a child, my mother and I would trek long distances to get a special kind of shrub. I had a skin rash that only the extract from the plant could heal. Mother complained that she did not need to travel such a distance when she was my age as it was almost within reach. She lamented that the plant was not common any longer, and it was losing its efficacy. Thus, in considering this experience as part of my writing process, I was drawn to the example of the Greek goddess Circe, and Madeline Miller's recent novel which offers a fictionalised version of the myth (*Circe,*2019). Miller alludes to the medicinal knowledge of Circe and how her environment helped provide the natural herbs needed. I give further details on Miller's inspiration for my writing later in work but suffice it to say here that I find the example fitting and inspirational in writing the poem 'in anger she came' below. Circe, the Greek mythical character in Miller's *Circe* was regarded as a witch because of her ability to use herbs for healing, protection and other useful purposes. Circe was banished because of

her use of herbs to an uninhabited island; she was able to enjoy produce from an uncontaminated ground.

This uncontaminated ground can be likened to how the Jos area was to plants before the discovery of tin. Circe had herbs that she could use for medicine from her environment. Circe's unique ability was one that should have been celebrated; instead, it was disregarded and frowned upon. The banishment she suffered was primarily because of her herbal healing ability. There is a long tradition of women knowing healing plants as exemplified by my mother and Circe. However, this knowledge of healing plants is a feminine epistemology that is marginalised by the patriarchy because it is seen as threatening the power structure as evidenced in the example in *Circe.* Circe's father felt she was disobedient to him and was a threat to his kingdom.

Another instance where the female medicine healer is seen as a threat is observed by Langwick (2011). Langwick recounts of her experience in meeting two separate traditional healers in the Tanzanian town of Nawala. The female healer, Binti Dadi, acknowledges that knowing about herbs and medicines links to keeping the connection between her and her kin. This knowledge acts as a continuum for her and her ancestors. However, the male traditional healer Kalimaga exhibits similar patriarchal criticism where he rejects practices used by Binti and claims such healing are dishonest. Like Miller and Langwick, my creative writing aims to return that hidden knowledge about women's healing power, attributes, and contribution to public awareness.

While the island of Aeaea provided the needed plants for Circe because of uncontaminated soil, some areas and parts of the Plateau cannot boast of this because of soil degradation. I have tried to capture the memories of such benefit from plants in the poem 'Ringworm'. The poem conjures feelings of nostalgia as it brings back memories of some

plants that served as medicine while growing up. Sadly, some of these plants, like the one my mother used for me, have become scarce and no longer available. Thus, in the poem "Ringworm" I decry the loss of plants that once served as food and medicine. I desire that this sense of loss expressed poetically would be transmitted through my writing.

While Circe was banished from her home and people, the land served as a shield. Circe had clean and uninhabited land to get herbs for medicine, as revealed in the myth. This reminds me of how my mother, and I would often go to the surrounding bush and get some herbs for fever and ringworm that were my constant companions. However, over the years, such a privilege has been lost in some areas on the Jos plateau. This loss is because the land has surrendered to tin ponds and acidic soil. The memory of such idyllic surroundings is what I present in the poem 'Ringworm'.

From a reflective point of view, the poem was written of the poet as a young child growing up and growing teeth. Writing this poem comes from the fact that the perspectives of women and children traditionally have not been considered in traditional science and research. Gabrielle Jackson (2019) notes that women have often been neglected from the early days of medicine and their contributions to the field of medicine considered inferior versions than that of men. In her article, Gabrielle Jackson quotes Kate Young, who notes that "For much of documented history, women have been excluded from medical and scientific knowledge production" (p.1). Because women were considered inferior versions to men; their contributions were considered inferior versions than men. I am using poetry, Therefore, as a vehicle for marginalised experiences as a female. I am also using poetry as a postcolonial response to the gaps in patriarchal scientific knowledge possibly. This perspective is what I hope my poem can add to the discourse on the effect of tin mining. In the poem, the poet describes when the shrub had its leaves and spikey parts in place. It represents a picture of a healthy plant with a picturesque environment conducive to the plant's

ability to thrive. The poet paints a picture and draws the reader's attention to a semblance of what plants enjoyed before the advent of tin mining.

The reference in line 12 (in this case Nanchen) refers to a female goddess which subverts dominant Judeo-Christian paradigms of knowledge and power and suggests an alternative tradition of power/knowledge which resonates with the myth of Circe. Miller argues that Circe was called a witch because of her healing skill with plants. The simile on line 14 of the poem 'Ringworm' makes a strong link to embodied feminine experience. It resonates with Helene Cixous' claim about the privileged relationship with the mother and child. She explains that from the woman's privileged relationship with her child, "There is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk". ("Laugh"881in Sorties).

Therefore, from the above summation, I assume that the shrub's gradual fading and its lack of potency relate to the contaminated soil and the cutting of plants for mining purpose. Ohemu et al. (2014), in their study on the usefulness of some medicinal plants on the Plateau, show the validity and importance of preserving such remedies for future medical research. I have seen the connection from scientific evidence, and my personal experience has given credence to what scientific research postulates. This cohesion is made possible by what creative practice allows me to do; a fusion of scientific research with lived experience to validate this work. It makes my methodology understandable in the light of scientific research. For example, I have read scientific research about how residual waste from tin tailings can cause cancer; then, I write a poem about this experience.

Also, recalling the death of people I knew who had cancer, the critical reading and knowledge of experiences have contributed to my writing. Some of the experiences have not been written creatively before, only in scientific writing, so my writing serves as an aesthetic presentation of the Jos situation. Because I have lived there, I have first-hand information,

and I am familiar with some of these stories; hence my lived experience becomes my material to write these stories.

7.3 SOIL EROSION

In addition to the loss of indigenous plants, tin mining activities resulted in soil erosion (Ndace and Haruna, 2012). As a result of population pressure, agricultural practices were adopted, which led to soil erosion in some places. Although tin mining brought about some socio-economic development, it also resulted in devastating the physical environment. People were unable to inhabit certain portions of land as a result of the degraded land from mining. According to Ehrlich et al., (qtd in Ndace and Haruna ,2012), humans share the physical environment with other living beings like plants, micro-organisms and animals. It has become necessary, therefore, to preserve the ground for the good of all its inhabitants. Also, Ndace and Haruna (2012) note that areas where the land was tampered with for mining activities, tend to increase flood peaks.

Furthermore, the critics, Ndace and Haruna, explain that there are diverse consequences of deforestation on the Plateau, resulting in the loss of trees, thereby making the area susceptible to erosion and, in some instances, flooding. With such scientific explanation, I now understand why there was flooding on the Jos Plateau in 2012; primarily because of its mountainous terrain, the region is traditionally less likely to experience flooding. Yet, the ground has become susceptible to flooding that consumed houses, humans, plants, and animals because of weak and porous soil.

The poem ‘In anger, she came’ was written as a creative interpretation of the significant flooding disaster on the Jos Plateau in July 2012. Mountains surround the city of Jos. By the nature of the topography, it is not an area that is susceptible to flooding. It was, therefore, unusual when the flooding of such magnitude occurred. A lot of people lost homes,

farmlands and some lives were lost. I use the goddess metaphor as 'landlord' to explain that because her land has tampered with that, she decided to visit the people in anger. It is an attempt to respond to the question of why the Jos flooding occurred. This poem offers a creative interpretation of the Jos floods of 1991 and 2012.

I have drawn inspiration from Wole Soyinka's play *Swamp Dwellers (1958)* where flooding occurred as a means of sacrifice to the serpent for the cleansing of the desecrated land. I draw from the example of one of the characters in the book, the beggar, who asked Makuri, another character in the play if there was damage to the farm due to the flood. In response, Makuri answered that everything was gone as the flood took away their produce and left nothing to harvest. The characters in *Swamp Dwellers* believed in the serpent cult and offered sacrifices to sustain them and their land (Nuri and Comilla, 2018). Similarly, the inhabitants in the setting of my poem ‘Oyinbo Come’, had a relationship with the goddess, Nanchen. They understood that they were to stay away from her sacred place.

However, like the swamp dwellers in Soyinka's book where the serpent was robbed of its swamp, the goddess lost her abode due to tin mining. Just as the fictional land in Soyinka’s book was washed away in flood, I use the mythical goddess figure coming like a flood to the Jos land. The goddess came in anger like a flood to wash the ground clean in anger for her desecrated land, a moment I refer to in the poem 'As Oyinbo come'.

The poem presents a creative analogy of the research on the causes of flooding on the Plateau, linked to poor soil connected to tin mining. One rational reasoning would be that the goddess had come to avenge her land's desecration due to tin mining. From the use of language in the poem, ‘In anger she came,’ it is evident that poetry conjures the flood experience in a way that scientific research does not. Also, my eco-poetic ambitions/desire to personify the environment as a goddess allows me to articulate the damage from the flood as

anger in human terms and allows a creative space in which this “revenge” can be taken for human action. It also poses a warning for the consequences of environmental exploitation.

Although it uses scientific postulation, as mentioned above, the metaphor used in the poem below offers insight and evokes human sympathy from the reader. Therefore, poetic language is used here to convey the issue of land degradation. The metaphor of an angry goddess is used to explain flooding caused by tin mining. The use of metaphors and poetic language is central to my methodology in this work. The influence of my academic research and my lived experiences are captured in the poem ‘In Anger, She Came’, as quoted above.

As mentioned earlier, scientific evidence revealed that land around mining region has become porous and susceptible to flooding. However, the poetic use of personifying the flood gives the human impact felt when flooding occurs. Poetic language, as used above, makes the experience relatable and not abstract. Although it is different from explaining the same issue, poetic language gives another equally valid way of transmitting the problem. Goki et al. (2016) have noted that mining ponds described as ‘dots of disturbance’ are found in most areas of the Jos plateau (p.24). These ponds are landmarks from mining clustered along the main road causing danger to motorists and other road users (p.6). In addition, Adegboye (2012) notes that “The ponds are always sources of erosion, especially in the rainy season when most of the ponds overflow their banks” (p.1). A creative interpretation of such scientific statements is what the poem cited above represents.

Furthermore, the fact that these occurrences are accounts of lived experiences gives authenticity to the methodology adopted in this work. I am familiar with the stories of people who have been trapped by the roadside after heavy rains. The flooded roads leave drivers and passengers at the risk of swerving off as the road becomes slippery. A family of five was almost drowned in one of these occurrences. My friend said their car swerved and landed in a

pit nearby because of the flooded roads. He said the shock he experienced that day still lives with him. The knowledge of such unfortunate occurrences plays a vital role in this thesis.

From the preceding discussion, it has become evident that poetry evokes the flood experience in a way that scientific research does not. It uses the imagery/personification of a goddess who is angry and decides to unleash her anger through the rain. My methodology allows me to retrieve and articulate these experiences, documenting and preserving this knowledge to remain in public awareness and is available to other researchers.

7.4 LAND TENSION AND CONFLICT

Tin mining on the Plateau led to an increase in population in the state due to skilled labourers recruited to work on the tin mines. As mentioned earlier in chapter 5, Hodder (1956) (quoted in Freund ,1981, RPT 2012) notes that one of the most significant effects of mining on the Jos Plateau has been an increase in settlers from all parts of Nigeria to work and trade on the tin fields (p.105). About one-third of these settlers were Hausa traders and other tribes like the Yoruba and Urhobos who also came to work the tin mines. Others include Fulani settlers drawn to the temperate environment conducive to their cattle as it was a fly-free region (p.120). Although most of the native inhabitants had family and clan heads, they were collapsed at the advent of colonialism and the discovery of tin which occurred in 1903.

Because many tribes were coming to the Plateau, leaders were chosen from these tribes to lead each community. As such, there was no general leader, but different leaders for various communities. Hodder notes that "the power of the chiefs declined in most parts of the Plateau where mining had been most active. The authority of the traditional chiefs was lost because there was an increase in different communities. There was a need for these other communities to lead their people instead." (p.122). As a result of this new trend and shift, traditional power structures were destabilised. These structures were not a deliberate attempt

from the colonial government. It was perhaps, a choice to use as the Hausa-Fulani already had an established form of government.

I grew up as a native of Plateau among several settler tribes like the Hausas, Yorubas, Igbos, and Urhobos. We lived in harmony and played together as children (Some of the characters I refer to in the poem 'Saturday Mornings' and the short story 'Mr Silmut' in the creative section.) However, the supposed harmony was altered on September 7th, 2001, when the Jos crisis brought about a division amongst the people.

One such example of the ethno-religious crisis is what I captured in the story 'My father's daughter'. It was Friday, the 7th of September 2001. I was in town on the fateful Friday when the religious tensions broke out in Jos. My older sister, whom I lived with, had been called to take care of our ailing and fragile father in the village. I was just sixteen years old. I was left to take care of my two young nieces aged eight and eleven. I had gone to town with my friend to purchase some things from the Jos main market that afternoon. It was sunny and bright, as was typical of most days in September. I got some beef, tomatoes, bathroom slippers, open sandals, and bones for our dog.

On our way back, we noticed the roads became unusually quiet. This was strange, especially that we did not notice this when we were coming to the market. Temporary checkpoints to cordon vehicular movements were mounted using old, worn-out Raleigh tyres. The bus we boarded, a yellow and green painted 14-seater-Hiace, moved in a hap-hazard way to avoid the barricade. From a distance appeared yellow flames; I heard faint chants that I could not decipher. The drumbeats were monotonous; I was sure the beats were played to the rhythms of war.

My thoughts raced to my two little nieces who were alone at home. Immediately my eyes swelled in tears. Hot liquid trickled down my face. They were tears of fear and

hopelessness. What was I going to do? I was unsure if I would get home alive, worse yet I was not sure my nieces who were left in my care were safe. The height of this saga was the uncertainty of whether my sister got to the village in peace. I am still shaken as I remember the ordeal my young mind went through when the first major religious crisis broke out in Jos.

As mentioned in the introduction about the history of tin mining in Jos, the tin mines were under Bauchi province, which meant the Bauchi emir had charge over the land. Freund notes that the Plateau region had remained unconquered by the Dan Fodio Jihad as they remained a mostly pagan people (Freund, 1957 RPT 2008). However, through the colonial authority who arrived on the Plateau in search of tin, the region became open to migrant workers from Sokoto, Zaria, Kano. Their arrival did not cause the tensions, although, the claim to ownership of the lands has resulted in religious tensions. Therefore, an accurate account of history will help forestall future conflicts as both parties (indigenous and settler) will appreciate each group's contributions and work within the boundaries that guide such settler/indigene disputes. This is very crucial especially as none of these groups is at fault. The construct from the colonial government during tin mining led to consequences that all the inhabitants of the region have been affected with. Perhaps, the colonial government too, were oblivious of its consequence at the time.

Consequently, storytelling is becoming an essential mechanism for bringing about such reconciliation. This is the aim of groups like narrative4.com, a group that advocates the power of change and acceptance by telling of others' narratives and experiences. I hope through my accounts of lived experiences; the reader will appreciate the physical pain of the consequence of tin mining.

In an article by Julianne Chiaet on October 4, 2013, the link between literary writing and the improvement of fiction, conducted by the New School in New York City, has found

evidence that literary writing can improve a reader's ability to understand what others are thinking and feeling.This is possible because literary fiction and real-life narratives, as exemplified in some of the stories I have included here, reveal the connection between the characters and their environment (p.1). Chiaet explains that the experiment revealed that literary fiction focuses more on the psychology of characters and their relationships. "Often those characters' minds are depicted vaguely, without many details, and we're forced to fill in the gaps to understand their intentions and motivations" (Chiaet,2013, p.1). Thus, true-life experience, as revealed in the story like 'My father's daughter' can be read as examples that reveal the relationship between the indigenous people and the Jos Plateau's settlers. The study further explains that most of the characters in such stories can "disrupt reader expectations, undermining prejudices and stereotypes" (p.1). As such, these characters help teach us how to behave towards one another, which helps the reader understand those who are different (p1). Thus, my storytelling is inviting the reader into their world to see a different perspective.

7.5 EXPOSURE TO RADIATION

The critic Ibeanu (2003), observes that the removal of soil during mining activities had materials that contain radioactive elements. These radioactive elements become deposited in areas near streams and ponds. These ponds provide water for irrigation, especially in the Jos region. Therefore, soil containing radioactive elements finds its way to the food/ vegetables consumed both by humans and animals. The continuous deposit of mining residue becomes hazardous to the atmosphere as the air, water, and soil are contaminated. Ibeanu notes that radioactive material from tin mining resulted in polluting the soil around such areas. Also, the inhabitants of the site use contaminated soil for farming purposes.

As a result, they indirectly ingest the contaminated soil- substance (through food). In a survey conducted by Babalola (1984) cited by Ibeanu (1999), to assess the impact of tin

waste through vegetables on the human body, it was discovered that getting cancer and other diseases was higher on the inhabitants who consumed vegetables grown around such regions.

Babalola (1984) quoted in Ibeanu (1999) observed that the waste from tin covered a large amount of land, including farmlands of the inhabitants. Often, the by-products from tin which are dumped on mining sites become exposed to radiation. Unsuspecting humans and animals consume some products like plants that have been exposed to radiation (Aliyu and Bununu, 2015). The impact of radiation from tin wastes (known as tailing) is felt when humans drink water from ponds or rivers. Ademola (2002) further notes that "the radioactive materials in the excavated soil may find their way into the food chain and hence to humans". In explaining the process by which humans indirectly consume products that have been affected by radiation, Adiukwu-Brown and Ogezi (2012) demonstrate that as plants and animals absorb radiation, humans consume some of these as plants from vegetables or meat from animals that have lived and grazed around such areas.

Besides, Ibeanu (1999) referring to Babalola (1984) noted that analysis carried out on vegetables and soil samples from the region to test the acidity of soil and contamination of plants proved high in toxicity than the world average. Ademola (2008) notes further that the continuous discharge of mining waste into the environment has resulted in the accumulation of radionuclides in the atmosphere, water, and soil which harm both human and nonhuman inhabitants. The effect of tin transcends beyond the loss of land, it is felt in the consumption of food, meat and water that has been directly or indirectly exposed to radiation. From the above scientific study, we can assume that some fatalities in the area are connected to contaminated food consumption from polluted soil. However, reading through scientific evidence alone does not give this connection. Creative practice allows me to connect lived experiences of stories and accounts that I am aware of or have lived through with scientific

research. This, in turn, gives credibility to the study above while also validating the evidence made of the lived -experience I had as a child growing up around the mining pond.

The poem "We ate poison" talks of the lived experience of the poet. While growing up on the Jos Plateau, my sisters and I walked long distances to get vegetables grown from irrigation farming known as *fadama.* The vegetables were considered good and better for consumption because the leaves were fresh and direct from the farm. I capture this assumption in line 1 where ‘We thought it was good’. The reason offered for this assumption was because "It was from the fadama farms" which had fresh vegetables. We thought such fresh and luscious vegetables would portend no harm to the body. The fresher the leaves, the better the nutrients. It was better than the ones sold at the market, which were not fresh and had wilted leaves. As residents, we were oblivious that such vegetables were not as tasty as they looked on the outside. Studies carried out by Adiuku- Brown and Ogezi (2003 and 1985), revealed that the water that flows along the streams used for irrigation on the plantation was from some of these already contaminated sources.

Regrettably, we were not aware that these vegetables were not fit for human consumption. The poet recalls in line 10 that 'We were told it was healthy' as "It came from the ponds at hayi". The vegetables came from the plantation, whose primary source of water was the mining streams. Contrary to what the poet was made to believe, the scientific evidence given by Adiukwu-Brown and Ogezi (2012, p.27) has proven that the water used around such irrigation farms were contaminated and not suitable for human consumption as shown in the poem.

The poet reveals that apart from the mining ponds which pose as death-ponds, water contaminated by radioactive elements from the tin ponds are also injurious to humans. In this way, the poet weaves scientific evidence with lived human experience and presents a human

aspect to tin mining effect. In line 15 the euphemism “they left early” alludes to the unspeakable facts and manner of their deaths, from the evidence presented by Babalola (1984), Ibeanu (1999), Ademola (2002) and Adiukwu- Brown and Ogezi (2012), above.

Another example of the connection to death that could be linked to the consumption of such contaminated vegetables is shown in my poem 'Ray of death '. The poem further reveals the impact of consuming vegetables grown around the mining ponds or watered from streams that flow from mining dams. As mentioned earlier, people that live in such areas where mining had occurred are prone to radioactive exposure. The poem emphasises that poetic language adds to formal writing that poetry can articulate trauma, reaching into spaces beyond scientific literature.

The poem opens with the death of a wife. It brings the human emotion at play where the poet reveals 'Oh how he cried' as he saw 'His world tumbling down' (line 2). The realisation and pain he felt at the loss of his wife were further compounded by the fact that 'He had a baby' (line 4) who was 'barely three years old'. He laments the pain of loss for his young baby who would grow without the love and care of a mother. By personifying a radiation-induced death, the poet uses the poetic narrative to evoke feelings from the reader, which scholarly writing alone cannot achieve.

From the poem above, we see that the poem’s concern with wife, motherhood and weight loss gives the feminine perspective on the experience of being poisoned. Leaving the baby without a mother is a powerful reminder of the human cost. This is just one example of many examples of the effect of tin mining degradation on different levels. This links back to Cixous and the earlier point about embodied experience and bringing the mother into the discourse. Here it is problematised by the culturally constructed desire to lose weight after

pregnancy to remain attractive to the male gaze – the poem shows how this compounded the issue of the poisoned food by causing the victim to eat more.

7.6 CONCLUSION

Overall mining had a strong influence on the environment and its inhabitants on the Jos Plateau. The result is the destruction of natural habitat and environmental pollution, which has brought danger and hazards to the inhabitants. Since practice-as-research allows me to use my experiences and write about what I am familiar with; I can better understand incidents that occurred to me and others in my community. I can now understand why the many ponds in my region and the reason for the nick-name – tin city that now evoke a memory of history, of the degradation of my region.

CHAPTER 8 - THE USE OF PIDGIN IN 'As Oyinbo Come'

8.0 INTRODUCTION

A primary purpose of colonialism was to take charge of the colonised people and their territories by taking control of their produce, resources, and distribution (Ngũgi 1992). Ngũgi asserts that the most powerful tool used by colonialists to achieve these aims was the medium of language and the use of narratives by which the people to be colonised were made to perceive themselves. The imposition of particular languages and false narratives amounted to a denial of indigenous cultures. This fuelled Ngũgi's demand for a rejection of the language of colonialism, which in this context was English. It amounted to a move from writing in English to writing in his native language Gikuyu**.** Thus**,** Ngũgi calls on Africans in colonised territories to reject further colonial subjection and embrace an African language that is authentic and frees us to project our culture and tradition (Ngũgi, 1992).

In his essay on 'English and the African writer' (Transitions, 1997), Achebe noted that although colonialism brought about the disintegration of indigenous cultures and tradition, we as Africans should not reject all the legacies of colonialism. Achebe encourages that as colonised people, we should pick out the good in colonialism and use for our benefit. He explains that because there are so many languages in Africa, it would be challenging to learn and write these different indigenous languages as Ngũgi advocates. Achebe suggests that African writers use English, which most African communities have been colonised by, to project African values and ideals. Achebe proposed that the adoption of English as the universal medium of communication was a unifying factor. As such, he suggests that the English language be embraced and used for good since he feels that "the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience" (p.346).

I believe like Achebe that English can be used to reveal African experiences. Although Achebe (1997) notes that abandoning one's mother tongue for another seems like an act of betrayal and disloyalty , he encourages that we move beyond this feeling of guilt and use it to project African indigenous norms and values in a new language that can be termed our language. One example of a language that can be referred to as an indigenous Nigerian language is Pidgin English. Pidgin English has been adopted and used by Nigerians to communicate indigenous values and culture. Faraclas (1987) notes that Pidgin English is a language that unites Nigeria's different regions together as it is spoken in almost all regions of Nigeria . Based on this premise, I have chosen Pidgin rather than Hausa, to write about my people's experiences. I have chosen Pidgin because I believe it will capture my people's experience adequately**.** In this case, Pidgin English is that 'new English' which is still in communion with its ancestral home by using words that portray indigenous Nigerian customs and norms**.**

By writing in Pidgin, I agree with Achebe in using the colonialist language but adapting it to suit my Nigerian experience. Therefore, I am using Pidgin as a Nigerian language construct to convey the tradition and experiences of my people on the Jos Plateau**,** and tin mining is part of these**.** It has majorly affected and defined us as a people, our landscape and lifestyle**.** I am developing Pidgin as a language and device, to provide literary access to reading the effect of environmental degradation on the Jos plateau. I am aware some of my audience do not speak Pidgin; therefore, I have included footnotes and glossary to explain and provide supplementary information on some of the words used in Nigerian Pidgin English.

8.1 ORIGIN OF PIDGIN

Nigerian Pidgin is one of many pidgin languages that resulted from the contact with European traders and missionaries that travelled to other parts of the world around the 17th century on voyages for trade opportunities (Esizimetor,2009). Some of these trips took Europeans to places like Africa. Languages were developed so that Europeans could communicate with native inhabitants. These languages were formed of mixtures of some African and European words that resulted in languages like Pidgin. Such pidgin languages were dominant in most countries where English was the official language of communication (Ofulue, 2012). Thus, Nigerian Pidgin emerged as a means of communication for Portuguese and English traders (Ofulue, 2012). Because of Nigeria's linguistic diversity, Pidgin was adopted for the convenience of Western traders. It later provided a language of exchange between different Nigerian peoples and bringing diverse linguistic regions together.

Although Nigerian Pidgin was a language of contact that emerged through trade transactions with Europeans, it was accorded a low prestige in Nigeria because it was not officially recognised. Most of the Nigerian people who spoke Pidgin had not acquired formal education. Therefore, Pidgin was considered the language for the uneducated (Akande and Salami, 2010). It was referred to as an inferior version of English. However, over the years, this notion and classification changed as the sociolinguistic atmosphere in Nigeria embraced the use of Pidgin by educated professors, lawyers, and graduates (Akande & Salami, 2010). Pidgin catered for the gap between those who could speak standard English and those who could not. Pidgin also became adopted as a language of unity and was used in everyday communication (Adegbija, 2004). Therefore, what started as a language of convenience for the ease of trade for the Western traders and the locals later became an avenue for linguistic unification as it is used in everyday communication.

The Niger Delta is in a different region to Jos in Nigeria. Still, the environmental degradation it has suffered from oil mining has several parallels with that suffered in the Jos plateau**,** the region I come from. Niger Delta writers have documented this extensively in Pidgin in both prose and poetry**.** In the Jos Plateau, however**,** very few works have been written that capture the land's experiences and the people in Pidgin. This is perhaps because Pidgin is more frequently spoken in the Niger Delta than on the Jos Plateau**.** Niger Delta writers such as Gabriel Okara *The River Nun* (1957), Ojaide (*Labyrinths*, 1970), started writing as far back as the 1950s about the devastation of their environment. However, for the Jos region, the minimal texts appeared about five decades later, with writers such as Yiro Abari (2018)—decrying environmental degradation on the Plateau in English.

I have chosen to write in Pidgin to raise awareness that the Jos region, like the Niger Delta, has environmental issues that need to be addressed**.** The two regions, Niger Delta and Jos Plateau, have similar environmental concerns. Pidgin works as a universal medium of solidarity between both areas. In this instance, Pidgin becomes a marker of solidarity for the Niger Delta and the Plateau which share a collective experience: that of a polluted environment (Akande and Salami, 2010). Below is an example of an excerpt in Pidgin about the degradation on the Jos Plateau:

Before oil moni or boom wey dem kno Naija Delta wit, we bin get our own for yonde here. It is the realization of the fact that environemnetal degradation had also occurred in the Jos environemnt that has prompted this writing. But di mata bi say our people come swallow saliva for our mata. Dem no talk at all. Me sef wey from the Jos area, foget say wey sef get problem for our back yad. Na di mata wey fa from us me come join mout put. I lucky say as I come dey rite dis project, naim me come see say plenty gist dey for we area. Na so I com begin dey look for how I wan yarn dey mata. As per say pidgin don get plenty people wey

dey speak am and understand, naim make me come decide to write small for de language wey we people from Naija delta and every part of naija fit join us put mouth for we matta.

8.2 DIFFICULTY IN TRANSLATION

There are challenges in translating from Pidgin to English because Pidgins do not follow standard English rules. Dare Owolabi (2012) notes that “Nigerian Pidgin English has become an independent variety of English which has produced a departure from the rules of standard diction, grammar and pronunciation found in standard English” (p.47)**.** Such departures have also been noted by the bilingual poet Sara Wheeler in ‘Translanguaging as part of the creative process’ (2020), where she explains “I have written combining languages in the same space, and I wasn’t very successful in converting it into English”(p.5). Wheeler also notes that dialects or other forms of language like pidgin often go against the rules of standard English. Wheeler further explains this difficulty where she states, "I had struggled to trans language the second half, whilst also trying to rhyme." (p.5*)***.** Such nonconformity makes it difficult when translating from Pidgin into standard English, as I experienced when trying to explain the pidgin poem ‘As Oyinbo Come’ in standard English. I wanted to translate the poem because, although I feel it stands well as it is, I also felt that it would be helpful to have a literal translation to assist non-Pidgin speakers in the specific context of this thesis**.**

‘As Oyinbo Come’ includes the terms ‘wahala’ and ‘kasala’ defined in the glossary. In a pidgin dictionary definition, the words mean **‘**trouble’, but when translated in the context of the poem, they specifically relate to the difficulties and challenges people encountered due to tin mining**.** This means that providing a literal translation is not sufficient, and risks misleading the reader**.**

Another example where an English literal translation does not work in the broader context from the poem is using the word ‘Nanchen’ in ‘As Oyinbo Come’. In the literal

translation, it is just a name for the goddess of the land. However, in the broader context of the poem, it signifies the goddess responsible for protecting the land and its people. This same goddess also offers protection against evil and enemies**,** but if the goddess is removed, the people and the land become vulnerable to all forms of hardship and loss. Furthermore, in line 8, 'Place wey Nanchen say make we no touch' in the literal translation refers to where Nanchen said we should not touch. However, when interpreted in the poem's context, it means sacred groves belonging to the goddess and not some ordinary place. Therefore, the pidgin words are used to drive home the meaning of the words in context. It takes an understanding of the entire history/story of tin mining and its repercussions to understand the context in which they are used in pidgin. Here pidgin helps to say many things more deeply yet in a smaller measure.

Another example of this difficulty in translation is shown in line (4) 'Naim dem begin show face'. When translated in the context of the poem, it means to appear or began to arrive. But the literal interpretation means to show one's face. Although it says to appear in my translation, the interpretation, in the Pidgin, for 'show-face' speaks of physical appearance.

From the preceding example, Pidgin is a relational language of expression and interaction that reveals a much more physical, immediate effect of the devastation of the environment than Hausa or standard English. It is revealed in words like 'we dey jeje dey farm/place wey Nanchen say make we no touch/say if we no work we no go chop'. All these words 'farm, no-touch, work and chop' connote physical action, which carries the tone, feeling, and the language of the people and their experiences.

Another feature of the pidgin language is its ability to dwell more on the present, making words come alive**.** This occurs in line 7**,** where 'Dem begin dey dig' can in this context cover past, present or future as often used in Nigerian Pidgin. However, for the

English speaker who doesn't know Pidgin, the word 'begin' in English suggests the present, an action that is about to take place.

Otheguy et al. (2015) define translanguaging as "… the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages" (p.5). In other words, in translanguaging, the speaker or writer adopts the liberty to break linguistic conventions and limitations of a particular language or languages. This is similar to the function Pidgin performs. Although it is an English construct, it does not follow some of the regular restrictions of standard English. Besides, Otheguy et al. (2015) note that translanguaging gives room for using the languages that were considered minor to be adopted and protected. It is against such a backdrop that I employ the use of Pidgin in 'Oyinbo'– a language that has been considered minor; and also that I employ it – a language not considered suitable for academia – in this thesis, albeit only in one paragraph.

In relation to the above, it is worth noting that Otheguy et al. (2015) argue that the study of translanguaging helps trace how ideologies, culture and communication were developed from the colonial to the modern time, using language. This categorisation provides a suitable basis for considering pidgin as a trans language. I have adopted Pidgin to reveal historical and cultural norms in the poem 'As Oyinbo Come'. Otheguy et al. also identify the ability to identify and use material from dominant languages (like English) as one of the core elements in translanguaging. Such an ability, to make use of certain features from the standard language, can result in the elevation of languages that have been termed as non-standard into acceptance.

8.3 DEFENCE FOR THE USE OF PIDGIN

Pidgin has been adapted for use in this section to bring home the issue of land degradation**.** Pidgin allows me to explain land degradation in a way that evokes feelings of realness and nearness to the land and people. Pidgin enables me to express our culture, pre-occupation, goddess, pain, anger, and lament all in one poem. Standard English alone**,** a foreign language to the Jos Plateau inhabitants, cannot adequately explain our peculiar experiences. On the other hand**,** Pidgin which has now been customised by the indigenous people, to convey our thoughts and pain. Pidgin in this work is used to talk of a close home relationship, that can be felt. Pidgin helps to situate land degradation in a domestic setting. Thus, I agree that Pidgin is an appropriate means to write about land degradation on the Jos plateau. Pidgin makes it visible and immediate; it carries the weight of the import intended which standard English alone is unable to express.

Pidgin is very suited to explaining the journey of land degradation through lived experiences. I am conversant with the issues and stories of land degradation and am also familiar with Pidgin English**,** so combining both leads me inexorably into autobiographical writing**.** Because autobiography is about one's experience, and Pidgin**,** home-grown and local**,** articulates local-lived experiences well. By presenting some of my creative work in Pidgin, I am arguing that such creative pieces can contribute to the entire discourse on environmental writing which would be lacking if I wrote only in standard English. I am familiar with both language and environmental degradation in my region. It is based on my knowledge of both the language and the subject that I write. Thus**,** I am raising awareness and drawing consciousness to my environment's problem through the Pidgin poem below.

8.4 CLOSE READING OF THE POEM

The section below provides a close reading of the poem ‘As Oyinbo Come’ regarding the violent act of a take-over of land by outsiders for profit and economic gain, resulting in hardship for the land and people. The reference to taking over land for profit and economic gain is what Edward Said in *Culture and imperialism* (2014) refers to as imperialism. Said argues that imperialism involves taking over and controlling the people and their lands. We see an example of the taking over the land and treasure on the Jos Plateau in the poem ‘As Oyinbo Come’. The opening line of the poem ‘Na as oyinbo come naim kasala bust’ alludes to the fact that it was because of the white man's coming that trouble began. The term ‘Oyinbo’ refers to the colonialist who discovered the source of tin deposits on the Jos Plateau. As a result of this discovery, indigenous land was taken from the people for mining, resulting in what Said has described as “untold hardship and misery to the land and its people”. (Said, 2014, pp.7-9). The term ‘kasala’ means trouble or calamity that erupted due to the discovery and mining of tin. The term connotes a forceful entry and breaking of land, tradition, culture. This forceful entry amounts to an “act of geographical violence”, violence over the people's physical land space, where the people have lived and known is forcefully taken away from them (Said, et al.1990, p.8).

In terms of the Jos Plateau, a forceful take-over of the land was carried out to satisfy the colonial government's economic quest with relation to tin-mining**.** The first victim of this violence is the land itself, which was dug deep into as the mining type carried out required digging deep into the ground. The land felt pain from the machines that were used in digging into its belly for tin.

Apart from the pain, the land felt**,** another form of pain could be the forceful shift of occupation. The region's inhabitants were initially farmers as revealed in line (2) ‘We dey our tin jeje dey farm’ but at the advent of colonialism, they lost farming and were made to dig

‘Dem say make we join dey dig’ line (13). The words ‘na visitor come be landlord’ (line 18) connote a change and shift in power, ownership and authority, where the owners of the land were now displaced. The word ‘landlord’ here represents the colonialists who arrived as visitors but have now taken over. Although the colonialists were the visitors, they were able to colonise the people and take over their property and even make them work and pay tax. For the Jos plateau inhabitants, their misery and suffering started with the discovery of tin, which also led to the loss of land. They were also required to work on these lands to pay the taxes demanded by the colonial authority. This action meant, ‘na visitor come be landlord’**.** Their lands were given to the colonial government, an act that brought hardship and sadness. This form of injustice which results in the loss of geographic identity, has necessitated the need for me to speak up. Said (1988) notes:

> for the native, the history of his or her colonial servitude is inaugurated by the loss to an outsider of the local place, whose concrete geographical identity must after that be searched for and somehow restored (‘Yeats and Decolonization’, p.77.)

Therefore, I suggest that in the reading of stories and writings like the ones I proffer**,** the import of land loss, lives, and occupation will be better understood.

‘As Oyinbo Come’ dwells on the need for the preservation of land. The poet reveals that portions of lands that were considered sacred and preserved for the goddess's traditional worship became desecrated by mining activities as seen in line (8) ‘Place wey Nanchen say make we no touch’. The goddess is believed to be responsible for both human and land fertility. The assurance of a bountiful harvest was tied to her being pleased with the land and its people. Losing the land meant she too could not provide a bountiful harvest. I express this as her becoming offended, and because she has been moved from her abode, lines 19 and 20 reveal her wrath being unleashed on both the young and old ‘Nanchen vex come dey swallow

people/ Old, young and pikin'. The external government's appropriation and destruction of the land have also involved an unintentional appropriation of the goddess, who now also destroys the land's inhabitants. This is evident in the use of the word 'swallow' which refers to how the inhabitants die in the tin ponds. The connection between human activity and the non-human inhabitants is evident as tin mining actions affected the goddess.

8.5 CONCLUSION

My basic argument is that Pidgin can express the indigenous problem of tin mining on the Jos Plateau. By choosing to write in Pidgin, I am carrying on and extending a tradition of writing in the people's voice to a broader audience, started by the pioneer Niger Delta writers. Poetry in Pidgin is one of the medium that the Niger Delta writers used to advocate for environmental changes. I am following in this tradition of using Pidgin as a strategy of protest against environmental degradation.

I find Pidgin suitable to interpret my methodology. Such a creative practice affords me the privilege of engaging with specific local ecological issues in a manner and language that is deeply suited to and immersed in them, thus providing a voice that speaks from the inside. Pidgin has become an appropriate medium for communicating my experience and knowledge. Thus, a combination of Pidgin and poetry fit as it helps convey the central issue of discourse, which is environmental degradation.

Since Pidgin was a language of contact stemming from colonialism and tin mining was also a product of contact with colonialism, it has become useful to infuse both colonial legacies. Pidgin has provided me with an excellent alternative to standard English to write about my home, experiences, and physical land. Pidgin allows for the use of a national language to handle a domestic issue, highlighting the effect of degradation on the inhabitants and the area.

CHAPTER 9 - CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

9.0 CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have attempted to establish the connection between tin mining and its effects on the Jos environment and its inhabitants. The work opens with the creative pieces of short stories and poems. This was a deliberate attempt to allow the reader to engage with the creative piece before the critical and theoretical writing. Chapter one opened with the writer's journey and complementary discourse. Chapter two focused on the general introduction, the aim of the study and the research questions. Chapter three explained the different approaches adopted for the framework and methodology, giving room for some examples of the work using the dynamic model. Chapter four gave a review of the importance of the African environment and its portrayal in writing as used by some African writers. It gave a connection between the environment and colonialism, which gave a basis for this work.

The connection between human activities and their impact on the environment was evident in this chapter. It highlighted the various aspects and functions of the environment to the African. This was instrumental in writing some of the creative work. Since the central theme(s) of the work was a direct result of colonial involvement, it became imperative to trace the source of colonial activity and the aftermath of such activities. Thus, chapter five gave a literature of postcolonialism and narrowed it down to the Jos environment. Chapter six brought to light female, black women writers, to which category I belong.

Revealing the many hurdles, they had to cross, which sadly is still relevant in contemporary writings even now. The sixth chapter gave credence to the involvement of the feminine aspect of land degradation and likened it to the subjugation of the female. Chapter seven gives an overview of environmental degradation effects like flooding, plant loss, and radioactive emissions on the environment and its inhabitants. Examples of close reading of

some of the poems were also included to explain the themes of discourse. The issue of language as an aftermath of colonialism is discussed in chapter 8. There is a close connection to the later chapters as they are all direct offshoots of colonialism which we are still faced with. The research questions helped to explain the inclusion of some of the themes and topics.

The present situation and crisis in the Jos Plateau are directly linked to tin mining that occurred decades ago. From my methodology, it became evident that my lived experience became a vital resource for presenting data for my work. Practice as research allowed me to express the embodied knowledge and experience in a way that can be better understood. Through the methodology adopted in this work, I have brought the connection between autobiographical writing and shown its attendant consequences in people's lives. Through the autobiographical writings, an understanding of land degradation and its consequences have been examined. The dominant yet silent narrative about women and their participation in the tin fields has also been explained.

Through some of the stories, it has become evident that memory can disrupt narratives about women on the Plateau and their participation in the tin mining industry. The conditions in which women found themselves were not pleasurable; they were forced to take care of their families, yet little mention is made of their contribution. Through some accounts, as revealed in the stories and poems, I have shown how these women struggled to keep their families while also helping to work the mines.

Other legacies of tin mining on the Plateau like the ownership of Jos became evident from the historical reviews explored in this work. We have established that the indigenous tribes of the Afizeres, Beroms, Anaguta, and Angas, among others, were the original inhabitants of the tin rich region. Also, we were able to confirm that other settler tribes

migrated to the Jos Plateau through the discovery of tin. Such finding is hoped will give some historical perspective and present a better understanding and tolerance, especially in the face of the sectarian crisis that has bedevilled the state in recent times.

Most of the stories and poems revolve around nature, the physical environment, whether before or after tin mining. This shows the close connection the Jos people have with their environment. Through personal and collective accounts, the environment's multi-faceted meanings are felt and understood. The outcome is not just a place where degradation has taken place. It has revealed the loss of home, the neglect of women, the abuse of children and the loss of childhood dreams and ambitions. The story and legacy of mining have become a cauldron of many things to different people.

9.1 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The thesis has helped give a new understanding and perspective on tin mining impacts on the Jos Plateau. It has merged Jos history into the literature and has produced narratives that were before now forgotten. The silent narratives through the characters and incidents in the short stories and poems have further illuminated the narrative about tin mining in the Jos environment.

As a teacher of literature in a secondary school a few years ago in Jos, I was puzzled that the recommended text for the study of literature had no reference to the mining history of the region. Instead, the literature of other regions was being used in teaching the literature on the Plateau. The closest thing to reflecting the Jos region was in the characters' names in the short stories. Years later, when I had the privilege to teach at a higher level of education, I was faced with a similar situation of teaching literature from other regions in Nigeria and nothing on Jos literature. Although, the faculty introduced a new course with the hope of incorporating indigenous literature into the taught curriculum at the university, yet, there was

a scarcity of materials to work with. The few written by indigenous writers had no mention of the history of tin or its impact on the environment and its inhabitants. But with the stories and poetry in this thesis, students will get to read and learn about experiences, names, traditions and culture that they are familiar with. A new perception of the literature on the Plateau might rise from the creative material in this work.

Besides, the opportunity created by introducing pidgin into the Jos plateau literature has given a wider audience. It will perhaps begin to register the success and positive outcomes that writers from the Niger Delta have achieved through their writings.

Through these lived experiences, it is hoped that a literature base would be open to chronicle the literature of the Jos Plateau. Many will have access to read about the Jos environment just like we have of the Niger Delta literature. Therefore, these stories will serve as a springboard for other writers to rise and begin to drum the plateau beats in other genres to promote Plateau culture and preserve her history and tradition.

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GLOSSARY

Definitions and meaning of some words used in the text

Alewa— A type of candy

Boleekeja — An old version of a 14-seater bus

Dadawa —Locust bean cake

Fadama — Hausa name for plantation vegetation

Filin ball— A semi football pitch

Face-me-I-face you— A unit of closely built houses

Gwote—Fonia seed porridge

Kamu—Corn starch

Kasala— Pidgin word for trouble

Kose—Bean paste deep-fried in oil

Kuli-Kuli— Fried groundnut paste

Kurukere— A type of dance

Kuza—Hausa name for the precious mineral tin

Kurkuzhi —Ngas name for story

Oyinbo— Pidgin name given to a white person or somebody of class

Ogbanje— Spirit child

Puff-puff— Fried flour dough usually mixed with yeast

Lambu—Another name for plantation

Nanchen- The goddess referred to in the poem

Mor-mor—Pidgin name for early morning

Wahala- Hausa name for trouble