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**Literature: An Emerging Value in the Hard Ground of the Niger
Delta**

Binebai, Benedict, PhD

Department of Theatre Arts
Niger Delta University
Wilberforce Island
Amassoma, Bayelsa State, Nigeria
E-mail: binebaijpp@gmail.com
Phone: +2348038718720

Abraye, Sunday D., PhD

Department of Theatre Arts
Niger Delta University
Wilberforce Island
Amassoma, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Abstract

Literature is a social value which creeps out from human imagination. Its production is motivated by the pressures of conflict in the world of humanity and the strong instinct of man to device ways and means to conquer these challenging conflicts. Environmental literature thrives more on human and social conflict, particularly on the ecology of oppression. All over the world, traditions of literature have cropped up from the wreckage of war and difficult circumstances and situations man and society have been plunged into. These facts are well reflected in the literature of the world. But the Niger Delta experience has not been given adequate scholarly attention by literary scholars. This study demonstrates how a prolonged

history and experience of violence in the Niger Delta characterised fundamentally by economic cannibalism, political brutality, environmental degradation and physical violence on the region have instituted literary nationalism. The study which deploys the historical and literary methodological modes of investigation shall undertake a conceptual foray on the implication of the concept of hard ground and its overview and as well provide a panoramic scaling of the hard ground in the history of struggle in the Niger Delta. The paper further argues that Niger Delta is a territorial figuration of hard ground and held firmly that literature is an emerging value of the rubbles of hard ground- a festering ecology of oppression and victimisation.

Key words: Hard ground, emerging values, literature, technological, renaissance

A Conceptual Clarification of Hard Ground

Hard ground as metaphorical linguistic coinage came into literary limelight in 2006 in Nigeria. Before this time the title Hard Ground first appeared as a book of poetry written by Tom Waits which grew out of O'Brien's work among homeless people in Miami in the 70s. The poetry of Tom Waits' enhances the experience by helping us to hear as well. He gives voice to the poor and homeless whose faces give us so much more. In Nigeria, it is the title of a drama written by Ahmed Yerima which won the NLNG literary prize in the drama category. This study is however, not a textual grilling of that drama. Hard ground as a term is implicated here as human territory in which several anti-human forces combine to make life difficult and unbearable for a people. The tyranny of geography, the tyranny of internal disunity, ecological degradation, economic exploitation and neglect, suppression of voice and agency and the constant physical destruction of lives and property, human consistent struggle at great peril and futility, all sum up to give meaning to the term hard ground. The hard ground is a territorial monster that humanity finds difficult to tame. By further implication, hard ground is a geographical and geopolitical territory in which human existence is brutally threatened by anti-human calamities such as war and destructive oppression. Hard ground is a human habitat of misery, nightmare, aborted dreams, and a place where human choices, hopes and expectations are scuttled and ridiculed by negative but domineering choices, hopes and aspirations of the conqueror. It is a land where visions of hope and prolonged struggles of repression and resistance by reactionary and revolutionary forces are constantly at daggers drawn. Hard ground is one of such human environments held down in a calamitous way by ideological cruelty and corporate violence, betrayals and institutional intimidation. Hard ground is a land that host oppression and discrimination. Colour discrimination, tribal discrimination and sectional discrimination. A land where sometimes minority rules and other times majoritarian oppression holds sway. All such cases of religious clash, wars arising from fanaticism and intolerance that bring about human misery and pain lead to the formation of hard ground.

Going by this understanding of hard ground as a metaphorical concept of doom and retrogression, it is logical to deduce that all known territories where humanity has suffered or suffers in the hands of, natural disasters, in the embrace of terror teasing tyrants and apostles of destruction are tested territories, territories that roundly and resoundingly fit into the site of hard

ground. Africa and the oppressed Africans in the diaspora are also in a hard ground. Trans-Atlantic slave trade is one major and primal site of hard ground for Africans. The Jews' holocaust, the physical torture of the blacks in America Britain even in their own lands like South Africa, East Africa etc are all cases of the hard ground.

A Historical Scaling of Niger Delta as a Hard Ground

The territory known and referred to as the Niger Delta of Nigeria has passed through several phases of the hard ground phenomenon. As an African territory it experienced the evils of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, as an important economic zone, many of its kingdoms were destroyed by the mercantilist Royal Niger Company of Britain, as part of British colony it suffered economic exploitation and the evil of divide and rule. As a wealthy region in the Nigerian configuration, it has for long suffered the heavy battering of post-colonial and post independent regimes in Nigeria. It is an area whose hope and chances of survival are scuttled by the decrees of the nation instituted to impound its wealth. Apart from the violence caused by bad governance and greed of rulers the area has suffered geographical and environmental challenges. This particularly affects the littoral regions of the region. Their traditional life support means have been destroyed by oil exploitation and oil pollution. The flora and fauna including rivers and farmlands are dead. The struggle to survive in the area to meet up with health needs, education and daily survival cannot be without doing risky jobs like sea diving in search of sea snails. As a region that shares boundary with the Atlantic Ocean with many of its communities located in-between labyrinth rivers, cases of oceanic and river infiltrations progressively diminish the measurement of most communities such that they are threatened with repositioning and extermination. The Niger Delta is the home of the oil industry since the late 1950s.

The Hard ground of the Niger Delta is no doubt orchestrated by unpopular opinions of elder statesmen and cruel laws and decrees promulgated by the Nigerian government to hold down the people's destiny. The Ijaws have been the most victims of this oil politics in Nigeria. The situation is made worse in the Niger Delta where oil spillage has poisoned water supply, fishing ponds and has damaged the cash crops, food insecurity and social insecurity. The hard ground of the Niger Delta is further hardened by the deal in small arms and light weapons which has fuelled ethnic clashes in the Niger Delta. Okechukwu Ibeanu presents a vivid historical record of these ethnic clashes in the Niger Delta.

These divisions are also many and treacherous: One recalls the Ijaw-Ilaje conflict, the Ogoni-Andoni conflict, the Ogoni-Okrika conflict, the internecine strife between the two Ijaw clans of Basambri and Ogbologbomarabri in Nembe, and the fatal wars between Ijaw, Urhobo and Itsekiri over the ownership of Warri, a major centre of petrol business in Nigeria. The central causes behind these conflicts are claims made by communities to land and creeks on which there are petroleum deposits or oil installations. In many cases, state officials and oil companies either generate or fuel these conflicts in their antics of divide and rule. For instance, it is known that oil companies have local chiefs and

notables on their payrolls in return for cultivating favourable public opinion on behalf of oil companies. However, the oil companies increasingly divulge their names to restive youths, thus fuelling anger and conflicts within communities (13).

This worsens the security situation in the region. The region experienced homeward hostage taking, rigging of highways with native gods and deities for compensation from road construction companies' abduction of oil-workers, several attacks staged by local villagers and gangs who are fed up with industry and a corrupt government whose primary aim is to fill their own pockets. Arild Nodland & Odin Hjeljestad hold that:

Corruption is rampant at all levels of society, gas flaring and oil-spills have disrupted the delicate ecologic balance of the mangrove swamps, and the trade in stolen oil (called 'bunker- The Niger Delta, as defined officially by the Nigerian government, extends over about 70,000 square kilometres and makes up 7.5% of Nigeria's land mass. It includes land in nine states in the south. Northern states have embedded divisions and caused thousands of Christians to flee. This is briefly, the strategic context facing international companies doing business in Nigeria. A history of ethnic tension, poverty and access to 'cake' very much shape the reality under which foreign firms have to work') has caused rivalry between criminal gangs and fuelled violence throughout the delta. Few Nigerians, including those in oil-producing areas, have benefited from petroleum production as much of the revenue has been squandered by poor governance and theft (6-7).

Kalu Uka in his paper "Making roads through Nigeria's Hard Ground: Challenges to pen-pushers and protagonist of struggle" expresses the point that "Hard ground seems an unusual metaphor when watery territory, swampy, liquid oil-bearing land, jutting with offshore core into the Atlantic, the world's largest ocean, when region that should reflect water, fresh or salt; clear or muddy; glittering or blackened, the WATER, is now conceived of as "Hard ground"(227) Kalu Uka may be right considering the fact that The Niger Delta Offshore is also a fertile base for the secretion and production of crude oil. He also may be right because most of the liberation struggles that bring calamity to those who fight and those who do not fight took place in the creeks. But the fact remains that the area called the Niger Delta is not entirely situated on Water. It is a fusion of water and dry land. The oil that the region produces is on both land and waters of the region.

The Renaissance of Literature in the Niger Delta

Literature of the Niger Delta is not separated from the history of the region that stretched from the slave trade through the colonial period to this era of postcolonialism. The literary writings receive the presence and pressure of history. Literature viewed from etymological perspective is any writing in print. This definition is inadequate for this work because it does not intend to consider any writing in the Niger Delta as Literature. Therefore, by literature, we mean the

creative writings in the Niger Delta that express themselves in drama, poetry and the novel. Interpretation and scholarship based on these creative writings is an integral and cardinal constituent of Literature. What is required in this work is the emergence of creative writing in the Niger Delta from the debris of the hard ground. Some scholars are still in doubt or are not persuaded about the existence of a Niger Delta literature. These scholars are always clearly obsessed by the Eurocentric rationalisation that there can be no modern literature in any part of the world that still uses the European languages and forms to construct literature. Literature is universal; it is continental, national, regional, ethnic and even individualistic. This makes literature a faculty of knowledge that has nested identities. One creative work can be all of this.

The association of literature to a particular locality is not validated or invalidated by the language appropriated alone. When a society's discourse is produced from materials: philosophy, cultural, forms of linguistic configurations, sociological issues and events even though it is clothed in the literary gab of the western invention; it bears the mark of that society. Literature falls into two most important kinds: written and oral literature. Oral literature consists of ballads, myth, jokes, folktales, legends, saga and fables; while the written foundation of literature has drama, novel, poetry and nonfictional literature. Literature is universal, but the fact cannot be contested that Literature has been named according to their roots of emergence. Hence there are kinds of literature across the world. For instance. There is English, Greek, Latin, Roman, African, Indian, American, French, Irish, and Spain, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Persian, Russian and Canadian literature. Even within a continent, there is literature which demarcates the countries that populate it. This is attainable within a country also. There is also tribal literature. In Nigeria, we have Yoruba literature expressed in various texts such as film text, the literary text and oral text. It does not matter whether it is written in an indigenous language or not. Italian Renaissance is the age of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, whereas Greece Literature, for the most part, encompasses the literature of Greek Gods, Goddesses and Grecian society. So, Niger Delta Literature deals with its culture and its unique experiences.

Intellectuals and creative matriarchs and patriarch in the Niger Delta first created a distinct regional and national literature. Their works of literature were written literature already in the pre-independent era as part of larger engagements for cultural affirmation, political rights, economic struggle and social prominence. Niger Delta literature and its evaluation in literary studies elucidate its neglect. A critically contextualised investigation of both canonical and non canonical writers makes the case that the few well-known writers from the earlier period. These writers namely, J. P. Clark, Gabriel Okara, Zulu Sofola, Ola Rotimi Tanure Ojaide, Egbe Ifie, G. G. Darah, Irene Salami, Simon Ambakederemo, Barclays Ayakoroma, Komis Ekiye and of recent Ebi Yeibo, Ben Binebai, Ibiwari Ikriko, participated in a larger Niger Delta literary movement that unswervingly contribute to the growth of nationalism in the region. This movement reveals the prominence of oppression, resistance and cultural identity in the formation of national literatures. Niger Delta Literature provides the establishment of identity formation. This is built on a critical and concentrated study of the creative pieces by writers of the region.

Niger Delta literature is the documentation of the thoughts, the feelings and the acts of the region. The Niger Delta literary canon as an independent institution was exercised by the long critical and creative career of the like of JP Clark, G.G. Darah Tanure Ojaide, Gabriel Okara and Ene Henshaw.

Rod W. Horton, Herbert W. Edwards notes that “Literature evolves from a society when out of patriotic and nationalistic fervour, its creative writers and literary scholars give attention to the events of the society. The literature tends to reflect the dominant tendencies of its era out of the moral, social and intellectual ferment impinge upon the sensibilities of literary men” (1). This is the case of Niger Delta literature. Niger Delta literature is one of the nested identities. It is African, it is Nigerian literature but more importantly, it is a regional variety because it is about the Niger Delta. Its influences are purely the experiences of the Niger Delta and the weak association of the region with the rest of the nation. The trend manifests in poetry, drama and the novel and it focuses on issues of identity, slavery, alienation, environmentalism, and the question of self-determination. The simple act of writing a creative piece about your society with the materials available in that society defines the literature of the area. The writing of a locality is that that is produced from or about that locality.

From the rubbles of the Niger Delta as a hard ground, regional literature has emerged in Nigeria known as Niger Delta literature. The Niger Delta has since worn a garment and armour of literature. The Literature encapsulates all the phases and sceneries of oppression in the region. From Jaja of Opobo, through King Frederick Williams Koko of the famous Akassa Raid to Nana Olomu against the British, the British invasion of Benin and the exile of Oba Ovonramwen down to the Isaac Boro rising against the Nigerian federation have been recorded in plays written by Niger Delta dramatists in historical plays. The dramatist of the region like JP Clark, Simon Ambakederemo, Mathew Umukoro and Ola Rotimi have reflected these in their works. Embu Reuben gives the source of Niger Delta Literature:

The recurring themes of exploitation, oppression marginalisation and resistance among others are shared by the Niger Delta person who sees the regions wealth taken to the Federal centre at the expense of those whose lives have been dangerously affected by the oil and gas exploration and exploitation. The writer’s vision tends to coincide with the socio-political, cultural and economic aspirations of the people of the area thus reflecting the evolving Zeitgents of the people. Therefore, the content and form of the works have the uniqueness that makes them stand out as typically Niger Delta because of their focus on the area and the Niger Delta perspective or viewpoint expressed in them (20).

It is significant to note that these works are influenced by the history of the hard ground. There is no phase of the historical development of the Niger Delta that has not been captured by creative literature of the area. Such works like *Akassa Youmi*, *All for Oil*, *Nana Olomu*, *Isaac Boro*, *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* are clear reflections of the Niger Delta Hard ground in which the people struggle for voice and freedom but get destroyed. Besides the historical dramas of the

Niger Delta, new generation writers have written fictions and factions in an impressive aesthetic manner to reflect the socio-cultural, political, economic and environmental problems of the region. The dramatic and poetic estates of literature are more vibrant in the Niger Delta. No doubt a lot of scholarly works have been done on Niger Delta literature across generic boundaries. Benedict Binebai has personally done a doctor of philosophy thesis on Niger Delta Drama titled “Identity politics in the drama of the Niger Delta.” The thesis affirms and defines drama of the Niger Delta as:

A drama is written about the region by a playwright who is either an indigene or a none indigene of the region, such a work should, apart from showcasing the Niger Delta setting, and their relationship with the outside world, show the people’s cultures and portray their socio-political and economist struggles, experience and other aspects of the lives of the people (12).

G.G. Darah in his paper titled “Revolutionary Pressures on Niger Delta Literature” stated that “all classical traditions of world literature are fostered by the environment, where there are intense struggles against great evil for the restoration of human dignity. This is the type of situation that created the great traditions of literature in Russia in the 19th century” (2) Tanure Ojaide like G. G. Darah and Ben Binebai, all scholars of the Niger Delta agree on the fact that Niger Delta writers bring into play their literary works as armaments in the struggle against marginalization, exploitation, oppression and devastation of the Delta environment. Tanure Ojaide under-scored the fact that:

Literature deals with the experience, worldview, sensibility and other shared values of a people to which the writer responds creatively. He states clearly that writer generally projects a vision out of their people’s experiences, and the writers of the Niger Delta often do this in their respective writings (11).

Tanure Ojaide is one literary activist, a writer of poems and novels, a critical scholar and a world acclaimed professor whose great home is the Niger Delta. In his public lecture at the Niger Delta University titled “Defining Niger Delta Literature: A preliminary perspective on an emerging literary tradition” he expresses the point that “the emerging Niger Delta Literature is a blend of the old and new, as Clark does in his play Ozidi, which he wrote after being aware of and recording the Ozidi Saga of the Western Ijaw people of Nigeria’s Delta state” (16). Here Ojaide claims strongly that contemporary Niger Delta literature including drama is strongly indebted to the oral traditions. The Niger Delta Literary tradition is a powerful one. A strong literary tradition is experienced when literature runs; it is full circle in a particular society. Creative literature, interpretative literature and scholarship complete the full circle. The Niger Delta has experienced this. The Niger Delta literary tradition is one of the oldest in the country. Its modern literature started with the creative works of James Ene Henshaw in 1945 before the Soyinka Clark and Gabriel Okara Generation. It is significant to note that most of those works are literary responses to the dislocation caused by the colonial experience in the region and Africa in general. The literary tradition in the Niger Delta whose foundation was laid by James

Ene Henshaw, and solidified by the likes of JP Clark, Simon Ambakeremo's, Zulu Sofola, Ola Rotimi, Esiaba Irobi, MM Umukoro, Tanure Ojaide, G. G. Darah and others persists today.

The Niger Delta is now an epicentre for literary activism embarked upon by both indigenous writers and writers outside the region. Regarding interpretation and scholarship, a large volume of research works has been carried out and completed by Nigerian and international scholars. It is interesting to note that our generation of writers and scholars add value to this tradition. Emergent writers of poetry, drama and Novels combine the task of interpretation of old works by first-generation writers as well as those of their contemporaries and also make a strong effort to define and establish Niger Delta literature as a body of knowledge in the universities through scholarly writings. The hard ground of the Niger Delta is in a continuous manifestation, and this has further kept the value of literature running. Despite the Amnesty programme which the federal government sees as a success, the oppression of the region persists even with the emergence of a Niger Delta as president of the federal republic of Nigeria. The structural violence against the region still holds sways. The laws, decrees, rules, policies and unassailable opinions of elder political leaders of Nigeria have not been relaxed. The influence of the hard ground on Niger Delta literature still lingers. Paulo Freire's observes that literature is a product of the ecology of oppression. It must be admitted that this germane fountain of Niger Delta literary inspiration. Paulo Freire in his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* harped on the fact that:

Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognise others as persons...not by those who are oppressed, exploited and unrecognised. It is not the helpless subject to terror, but the violent who with their power create the concrete situation which begets 'the reject of life' it is not the tyrannised who initiate despotism, but the tyrant (41).

The writing of our generation, which is the crop of writers emerging from the region from the late 1990s to present times, is a reaction to the deplorable condition of humanity and environment of the hard ground. Sunny Awefeada in his article christened "Blood on the Nun", identifies the dramas of the Niger Delta of this generation as "an angry and regenerative variety of literature which chronicles the woes of the region while attempting to chart a way out" (28). These writers are no doubt as angry as the present-day militants of the region. Their literature carries the banner of imaginative and intellectual militancy. From poetry to drama and from drama to the novel, the protest tradition runs through, emerging poets like Ebi Yeibo protests the environmental pollution of the Niger Delta, particularly his native environment in his poem "barren rivers" in "A song for tomorrow" and other poems (2003). Barren Rivers is a social realist poem that reminds us of the ecological degradation and devastation and the destruction of the biodiversity in the Niger Delta. The poem draws its source from the Ijaw man's experience of the destruction of his aquatic life support means and the presence of hunger, starvation and misery and the gross neglect of the federal government. In a similar vein, Sofia Obi's poetry collection titled *Tears in a Basket* shares a protest vision with Yeibo's poetry. As a poetess from Oloibiri area, she detests and protests Oloibiri a first-generation oil producing community that has been milked dry by the nation and oil companies. The poetess frowns in

the poem “Oloibiri”, the constant oil exploration and exploitation of the region with the oil benefit running into the accounts of the tyrannical rulers of the nation. This subject has a strong literary space in other works of the region like *Drums of the Delta*, *Sounds of the Rising Sun and My Life in the Burning creeks* and Eni Jones’ *Scent of Crude Oil*. These are works that are born from the cocoon of the Niger Delta Hard ground. Together with works of first-generation writers a literary tradition of the Niger Delta is sustained and maintained. Literature of the Niger Delta has been acknowledged strongly and given the stamp of existence as regional literature in Nigeria by a significant apex academic body of theatre artists, the society of Nigerian Theatre Artists (SONTA). This is an academic umbrella dedicated to the promotion of drama and theatre in Nigeria and the rest of the world. Its members are drawn from all Nigerian universities and Colleges of Education where Theatre arts are established as a discipline. This bi disciplinary association dedicated one of its publications to the discussion of Niger Delta drama and theatre. The book titled *Theatre and Minority Rights perspectives on the Niger Delta*, edited by Austine Asagba commits Nigerian theatre scholars to reflect on the drama and theatre of Niger Delta literature. Asagba notes in his preface that:

The eighteen selected essays published in this book have been carefully chosen from the array of presentations at this conference, based on their thematic relevance, aptness, incisiveness and topicality in respect of the challenging socio-cultural and political issues of the Niger Delta region. The volatility and the great potential of the region to explode militarily, thereby leading to possible national disintegration provide an enriching and refreshing source material for a visionary artist, playwright and other critics to contribute his quota to the national debate for survival and sustainability. Therefore, the linkages between theatre And Society, drama and literature, art and social change are well espoused and discussed in all ramifications (8).

There is no doubt that Niger Delta literature is a new variety of literature in Nigeria that has been given severe creative, critical and scholarly attention. It is a value that has emerged from the prolonged hard ground of the region which has caused the people’s harrowing psychosomatic and disturbing bitterness, social and political dislocations. There is today, a literature of Niger Delta in the curriculum of some universities in the Niger Delta region as well as institutions dedicated to Niger Delta studies known as Institute of Niger Delta studies. This is found in Niger Delta University. This institute is a conglomeration of disciplines in the humanities, social sciences and the sciences designed for the epistemological development of the region. It is significant to note, particularly in the area of literature, that it is these works of playwrights that have established the foundation of literature of the region. The establishment of a regional literature is no doubt an attempt to develop the culture of the people also. This is based on the logic that literature is culture (Binebai 161) the emergence of Niger Delta literature on the literary horizon helps in appreciating national cultural diversity in Nigeria. Niger Delta literature is a value emerging from the hard ground. As a protest variety which establishes the Art society dialectics, it has participated actively in the liberation of the region. Plays like J. P. Clark’s *All for Oil* dramatises the violence against the tribes that populate the Niger Delta

particularly those in Warri caused by both western colonialists and post political leaders and voices in Nigeria. *All for Oil* further queries the inappropriate configuration of Nigeria nation. The play is a thesis on political philosophy and concludes that true federalism is most appropriate for the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Nigeria state. *Drums of the Delta*, the drama that was staged at the Silver jubilee celebration of the Association of Nigeria Authors at the Glory Land Cultural Centre, Ovom; Yenagoa on the 3rd of November 2006 also participated in the political debate of the nation. The play advocated power rotation, political balance and predicted the emergence of a Niger Deltan as president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Literature contains the wisdom, sensitivity and sensibility of a society; it is a transporter of culture and a veritable instrument for social improvement and conscientisation. Literature is the voice of a nation, the voice of a people who are dislocated and exploited. A society without literature lacks melody, self-reflection and self-regulation. Literature gives the society the opportunity to understand itself correctly. It points to human errors, the adverse effects of totalitarian political control, imprudent policies, philosophies and ideologies and other variety of social decadence to provide a positive direction for its society. Literature is the original documentation of life. It is an integral part of a country's civilisation, tradition and history. Literature can tender insight into social interpretation and assessment. This makes it a central module of humanity. With its life-transforming philosophical ideas, it can tell us a lot about society through the use of characterisation and plot, and the themes in the creative work. Literature shows the light of human temperament in all its eccentricity and magnitude, and it provides knowledge of the human past, present and even projects into the future. Literature serves as a foundation for information gathering and dissemination.

Niger Delta literature has several values. These are entertainment, political, artistic, cultural, historical, philosophical and ethical values. The oppression, exploitation breeds these values and awful neglect and the constant danger successive regimes place the region in Nigeria. These values are shared with the general character of any literature in the world. Literature has the magnetic power of the chameleon; it adapts to the predominant colour of its society. Society, therefore, sets the direction for literature to thrive. If literature is important to society because of its contribution to the cultural, artistic, ethical, philosophical, historical and political contributions to the development and advancement of a society, its emergence in the Niger Delta from the wreckage caused by the hard ground is a thing of enormous attraction. Life in the Niger Delta Hard ground inexorably confronts its writers with the Promethean predicament. From poetry to drama and from drama to the novel, the writers have been confronted with the challenge of carrying the fire from Prometheus to construct a Niger Delta that is willing to accept the Promethean flame. Niger Delta Literature is thus literature of the revolutionary temperament in which the issues of the day are the immediate concerns of the writers. It has made significant contributions to the region's social ideology. It deploys rationality in its faith in human progress; it strives towards perfectibility of man and has a well-built desire for social improvement. Literature has a passion for human equality within the Nigerian federation based on natural rights. It has set a pattern of a literary tradition that represents the desires and socio-

cultural and political identities of the region. Niger Delta literature has come to occupy a space in democratic Nigeria.

Conclusion

The central thesis of this work is to establish the fact that the Niger Delta as a hard ground has some positive values. Literature is one glaring value the oppression of the region has given to the area. Works of drama, poetry, prose fiction and even films have been written and produced on the hard ground of the Niger Delta. Furthermore, scholarly attention has also been primarily given to the literature of the Niger Delta. What this implies is that Niger Delta literature has emerged as a body of knowledge that has been consumed by researchers, students and scholars. The study further establishes the fact that hard ground has the inspiration and mental capacity to push oppressed people into literary nationalism in their hard-line search for survival.

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