
Domestic Resource Control and the Interplay of Violence in Uzo Nwamara's *Dance of the Delta*

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores Uzo Nwamara's *Dance of the Delta*, which has not received the critical attention it deserves since its publication in 2010. The study focuses on the play's concerns with resource control and violence, seeking to identify and examine the specific notion of resource control agitation and the role of reciprocal violence in the process. The study uses an eclectic theoretical framework, including Galtung's theory of violence, Foucault's theory of power, and postcolonial eco-criticism, to qualitatively investigate the resource-related agitations in the play. The study discovers that the play inaugurates a new notion of resource control, domestic resource control, which excludes the federal government from the resource-related power play. This novel notion involves a triumvirate of multinational oil companies, reprobate and opportunistic Niger Delta leaders, and the rest of the citizens of the region, who engage in an interchange of violence as resource control agitation strategies. The oil companies agitate for continued monopoly of the oil business and deploy structural violence, while the renegade leaders seek continuous appropriation of resources using both structural and personal violence strategies. The beleaguered Niger Delta folks engage in violent revolutionary actions, which are physical/personal in outlook, seeking to upturn the status quo. The study concludes that violence, subtle or obvious, is inevitable in the Niger Delta and any resource control agitation.

1. Introduction

Uzo Nwamara is a Nigerian poet, novelist and playwright. *Dance of the Delta* (2010), which is his first published play, is a revolutionary work set in the post-colonial Niger Delta region of Nigeria against the backdrop of oil politics and its consequences in the region. Since the discovery of oil and gas in a commercial quantity on its soil, the Niger Delta has become one of the most critical parts of the country perhaps second in importance only to the nation's capital city, Abuja. With crude oil and gas replacing agricultural products like palm oil, groundnut and cocoa as the chief exports of the country hence the mainstay of its economy and foreign reserve, the Niger Delta has become a beehive of activities and a treasure trove for multinational oil companies who work in collaboration with the Nigerian government and some very influential foreign and local individual investors in exploring the natural resources including merchandising them. Consequent upon the same commodities, the region has also grown into a theatre of "wars"

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between and among the different stakeholders thus authenticating the claim that wherever oil is found, there is conflict. The plethora of conflict situations that the region has witnessed stem from the politics surrounding the prospecting, exploration, exploitation, sale and distribution of the resources and revenue accruing therefrom. This unpalatable scenario has since formed one of the most topical subject matters among social, political, economic and even religious analysts and commentators within and outside Nigeria. It has as well served as a veritable material for oral and written literary expressions/compositions such that the amount of ink already spilt on the subject equals the barrels of crude oil sucked from the belly of the underwater soil of the region on a daily basis.

Like Esiaba Irobi in *Hangmen Also Die* (1989), J. P. Clark in *The Wives' Revolt* (1991) and *All for Oil* (2000), Ola Rotimi in *Akassa You Mi* (2001), Osonye Tess Onwueme in *Then She Said It* (2002), Eni Jologho Umuko in *The Scent of Crude Oil* (2010) and Oyeh Otu in *Shanty Town* (2011), Uzo Nwamara has in *Dance of the Delta* provided refreshing insights into the interactions of the critical stakeholders with relation to the control of the benefits accruing from the oil enterprise in the Niger Delta. Expectedly, these interactions are characterized by violence of diverse shades and degrees. Thus preoccupied with the oil and violence motif, *Dance of the Delta* becomes an important addition to the growing body of Niger Delta literature espousing the fundamental desire of its people to manage their God-given resources.

In spite, however, of its topicality and well over ten years of existence, *Dance of the Delta* has remained in some sort of critical limbo. Part of the significance of this essay will, therefore, rest on its position as a foundational critical enquiry on the play, while its main concern is to investigate the play's dramatization of the entwinement of resource control and violence in the play.

2. Resource Control and the Niger Delta Agitations

As a verb, the word "control" means the exercise of power, authority or dominating influence over something, while "resource" could stand for something that can be used for support or help to something else or an available wealth, stock or supply of something that can be drawn from when needed. Emanating from the above is the knowledge that a resource is equal to a pool of valuables which can be drawn from and deployed to solving specific human problems. Suggested in that definition is that a resource is something of some economic value. However, the term may extend to nonmaterial phenomena such as education and health care (Galtung 171; Confortini 4), among others.

A word very much associated with "resource" in our clime is "natural" hence, the phrase "natural resources" has become a household term among the people of Nigeria. The term is supposed to signify such gifts of nature as land, water, air and all that are deposited in them, but it is rather often used to represent only the solid, semi-solid and liquid deposits in the soil and waters generally referred to as minerals such as crude oil, gold, bitumen, limestone, zinc, ores, rocks, metals, crystals, pearls, et cetera. The idea of natural resources suggests that there are resources that are unnatural, and it is perhaps easy to identify such as those treasure or supplies generated or created by man out of the resources which are considered as natural. By these, we have in mind such things as money, goods and infrastructure. The term "resource control" would, therefore, stand for the exercise of power, authority or influence over the natural and unnatural

wealth or the stock/supply of something from which a person or people can help or improve themselves.

In Nigeria, “resource control” is a very popular term often associated with the Niger Delta region of the country. Examined in the context of the Niger Delta, resource control is linked specifically with the crude oil and gas deposits in the soil of the region. These (especially crude oil) are the resources that have become the mainstay of Nigeria’s economy and whose regulation and control have been masterminded by the Nigerian government and its allies rather than by the people on whose soil it is deposited by nature. The phrase is, therefore, synonymous with the various peaceful and violent agitations by the people of the Niger Delta aimed at securing the right to oversee and regulate activities relating to the harvest, sale and distribution of the wealth accruing from these resources that nature has deposited in their land.

Although the phrase “resource control” was first used in the Ijaw Youth’s Council’s (IYC) Kaiama Declaration of 11 December, 2998 to expressly designate the said agitation, the origin of the region’s struggle for resource control dates back to the era of the legitimate trade in palm oil which replaced the trans-Atlantic trade in humans (slaves) which had become illicit with the abolition of slave trade in 1807. Local palm oil traders, it has severally been acknowledged, engaged in some kind of resource control agitation against their oppressive white counterparts who controlled the trade in many ways including the fixing of prices for the goods. The same agitation for resource control was the highlight of the Ijaw representation at the 1957 Willink Commission of Enquiry in which the fears of the minorities and the means to allay them were extensively articulated. Resource control also lay at the root of the failed agitation by Isaac Adaka Boro for the creation of the Niger Delta Republic in 1966. In spite of its seeming failure at the time, the Boro agitation is believed to have incidentally culminated in different forms of contemporary oil-related restiveness in the region including those of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), the Niger Della Volunteer Service (NDVS), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Egbesu group and the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP).

The resource control phenomenon has since the Kaiama Declaration taken on varied definitions and conceptualizations with all coalescing in four broad notions and manifestations identified by Rhuks Ako in a study entitled “Resource Control in the Niger Delta: Conceptual Issues and Legal Realities.” The first three notions, according to Ako, include *absolute* resource control, *principal* resource control and *increased derivation*. Advocates of absolute resource control sue for a 100 percent control of the resources by the region, while the exponents of principal resource control advocate direct and decisive role by the region in the prospecting, exploration and exploitation of the resources as well as in the distribution of the revenue accruing from the sales of the product. The increased derivation notion is somewhat ambiguous because of its link with federalism which could mean a system whereby the federal government generates the revenues and shares them with other strata of government like the state and local governments according to need. What the increased derivation advocates actually mean is “fiscal federalism” which permits that “the federating units own and manage their resources and revenues but make a contribution to

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the central government to fund federal responsibilities” (Ako 2). This is the form favoured by the Southern Governors as expressed on page 17 of *The Guardian* of April, 2001 being their resolution at the end of their meeting of Tuesday, March 27, 2001 in Benin. According to them, resource control entails:

The practice of true federalism and natural law in which the federating units express their rights to primary control of the natural resources within their borders and make agreed contributions towards the maintenance of common services of the sovereign nation state to which they belong. In the case of Nigeria, the federating units are the 36 states and the sovereign nation is the Federal Republic of Nigeria. (qtd. in Orugbani 291)

There is a fourth notion referred to as the local resource control. This advocates allowing inhabitants of the Niger Delta region access to the resources of their environment and ancestral land. This variant is a product of the direct failure of the region’s political class to deploy the monthly oil revenue allocations to the states from the federal government to improving the living conditions of their people as well as the refusal of the leading militants to make the “rewards” of their struggle and the monthly stipends and the vocational and educational opportunities provided by the federal government to trickle down to the common and ordinary citizens of the region. What this means is that the dividends of the political and militant struggles of which the ordinary citizens are a part is misappropriated by their political and militant leaders for their selfish ends.

2.1 Reasons for the Resource Control Agitation: An Overview

Having outlined the diverse notions of resource control, it is important to understand the very reasons why the agitation became necessary in the first place. The agitation for resource control by the people of the Niger Delta became imperative because of the neglect suffered by the region both in terms of the distribution of the funds accruing from the oil and gas enterprise for infrastructural development and in the damage done to the Niger Delta environment by adverse occurrences during the drilling and transportation of the crude oil. The Niger Delta source of the nation’s wealth and foreign reserve is ironically the most backward in the entire country no thanks to negligence of the region by the federal government and its operators who feed fat from the oil and its revenue without recourse to the devastation suffered by the people and the environment from which the wealth accrues. Defenders of the government have cited the difficult terrain of the core Niger Delta region made up of aquatic, muddy and marshy soil as the major reason why the area has remained underdeveloped. This argument is, however, flawed by the transformation that has taken place in climes not naturally better than the Niger Delta like the deserts north. It, therefore, bears noting that the problem is actually not that of difficult terrain but sheer disregard for the Niger Delta region and its people whom the powers that be consider inconsequential as a minority group. Otherwise the amount of wealth accruing from the daily drilling of the oil resources of the region and which are deployed to the development of other parts of the country is big enough to transform the Niger Delta into a tourist hub of the sub-region if not of the world. Regrettably, the control of the resources of the region was long ago vested in the government of Nigeria by decrees and inhuman constitutions, thus, deliberately incapacitating the goose that lays the golden egg.

Beyond infrastructure, human capital development is another aspect in which the Niger Delta has suffers neglect. Many commentator-sympathizers of the region have constantly decried the

systematic and deliberate efforts by the successive federal governments of Nigeria to ensure that citizens of the Niger Delta region are left perpetually poor while financial giants are constantly raised in other parts of the country from the wealth of the Niger Delta. A case in question is the distribution of oil wells to the northern elite especially military generals while citizens of the Niger Delta are hardly ever remembered. The reason for this deliberate apathy is not far-fetched. One may be tempted to infer that it is to keep the people of the region financially and intellectually incapacitated as a means of averting any form of effective uprising from them since such an action requires sponsorship and intellectualism.

Coupled with the lack of infrastructural and manpower development among the woes of the Niger Delta region is environmental degradation caused by the multinational oil companies operating in the region. Oil spillage is a constant occurrence in the Niger Delta and as a result the people's source of drinking water, aquatic life and farmlands are destroyed thus creating hunger in the land while multiplying diseases in the local population. One commentator, Greg Campbell, blames the situation on the oil companies' indifference, deliberate use of inferior equipment in their operations and their poor maintenance culture. In his words in the *Times Magazine* of June 2001, "most of the 3,000 miles of above-ground pipelines crisscrossing the Delta are 30 years old and built on at lower standards than modern pipes" (qtd. in Chinaka 30). The attitude of the multinational culprits towards remedying the spillages each time they occur attests to the deliberateness of the occurrences. In Volume II of his *Environmental Field Report* of 2009, Nnimmoo Basseyy attests to the facts of multinational oil companies' display of irresponsibility regarding the cleaning of spillage sites especially in their collusion with contractors to do a shabby job:

Instead of proper clean-up of spill impacted sites, the contractors just hire some youths to set fire on the affected area, burning the whole place. When Shell supervisors come for inspection, even when they see clearly that such burning was not effective, they go ahead to approve that the clean-up job has been properly done, hence recommending for final payment. And part of the payment goes to the Shell supervisor for approving the wrong job. (Basseyy 230-231)

Related to oil spillage is gas flaring which is also a constant occurrence in Niger Delta. Gas flaring is perhaps more dangerous than oil spillage given that it contaminates the air which is the source of the oxygen that humans breathe in to keep alive. With the air in the Niger Delta environment contaminated by the toxic gas emitted from the exploration facilities of the multinational oil firms, such diseases as cancer, asthma, bronchitis, cough and blood-related cases abound among the citizenry. This is coupled with the emission's contamination of the people's sources of drinking water, vegetable food and livestock as well as the acid-rain, deforestation and global heat which it engenders.

These and many more of the inhuman activities of the Federal government of Nigeria in collusion with their multinational oil company-partners necessitated the Niger Delta people's agitation for resource control. They believe that ceding to the region the power to control the resources emanating from their soil will solve the problems of the region most of which have been outlined

above. But whether resource control is the answer to the array of problems outlined above is yet unknown since the federal government of Nigeria has done very little in assenting to the different demands that have been baptized as resource control.

3. Violence

"Definitions of violence" Rutherford et al have observed, "depend upon their purpose" (1). Nevertheless, Howard Ehrlich defines it as "an act that is motivated by prejudice and intended to do psychological or physical harm to people" (278). While Ehrlich's definition may be considered valid in its association of violence with prejudice and harm, it appears incomplete by its limited scope in the possible receptors of the act. It also seems to have subsumed the diverse forms and manifestations of violence under two broad terms, namely psychological and physical. It is defined by the World Health Organisation in the World Report on Violence and Health (WRVH) as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (qtd. in Rutherford et al 1). Pertinent in the above definition are the facts that an action must be intentional to be termed violent and that a violent action may be threatened or actual. The WRVH identifies three categories of violence depending on the perpetrator and four further categories depending on the nature of the violent situation. Violence depending on perpetrator include self-inflicted, interpersonal and collective violence; while those depending on the nature of the situation are physical, sexual and psychological violence in addition to violence relating to deprivation and neglect.

The definition by the World Health Organisation is similar to Ehrlich's in limiting violence to only human actions but differs in its inclusion of personal harm among the possibilities. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the act of violence could be done to or carried out by non-humans, thus, its definition would be more inclusive when phenomena such as the *ecosystem* is included among the receptors of violence and nature as one of the perpetrators of the act as well. For example, such disasters as earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, volcanoes and storms are violent occurrences of nature, and their impacts are felt by the ecosystem. However, the basic types of violence may be identified as: physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence, psychological violence, spiritual violence, cultural violence, verbal violence or abuse, financial violence and the violence of neglect ("Nine Types of Violence" 1). Physical violence happens when someone controls another's actions by the use of part of their body or an object. Sexual violence represents a situation where someone who is unwilling to take part in a sexual act is forcefully made to do so by another. Emotional violence has taken place when someone is made to feel worthless or stupid by the words or actions of another person. Violence becomes psychological when someone gains control of another by instigating fear in them through threats. Spiritual violence (also called religious violence) occurs when someone manipulates, dominates or controls another person using their spiritual beliefs. It is cultural violence when someone's cultural practices, religion or tradition are deployed to harm an individual. Verbal violence involves the use of spoken or written language to cause harm to someone. One is a victim of financial violence when another person controls or misuses one's financial resources without one's consent. The violence of neglect occurs when a person reneges on their responsibility to provide care or assistance to another individual ("Nine Types of Violence" 1).

Based on the foregoing foundational discourse on violence and resource control, this essay shall, in its analysis of the primary text, be answering questions such as: What notion or notions of resource control is the play espousing? Is there a possibly new notion of resource control that the

play seeks to enunciate? Are there resources unrelated to the crude oil and its accruing funds that the play is possibly examining as well? How much are the agitations for resource control in the play entwined with violence? What types of violence are deployed in the different agitation processes and how effective are they in aiding the actualization of the agitation?

4. Theoretical Framework

A single theory may not adequately account for the hydra-headed nature of the present study, hence an eclectic framework involving Galtung's theory of violence, Foucault's theory of Power and postcolonial Eco-criticism has been deployed.

Johan Galtung's Theory of Violence

Johan Galtung's theory of violence is predicated on his conception of violence as "present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations" ("Violence" 2). He formulated this theory based on a tripartite typology in which the diverse kinds already enumerated in this study could be subsumed. These include *personal violence* which he describes as direct, *structural violence* which he labels indirect and *cultural violence* which, together with the structural, are though subtler than the personal in manifestation and effect, are as equally harmful as the personal. Galtung espoused the concepts of personal and structural violence in the essay "Violence, Peace and Peace Research" (1969) while the idea of cultural violence came later in an essay of the same title published in 1990. According to Galtung, violence is personal when "a clear subject-object relation is manifest because it is visible as action" and "personal because there are persons committing the violence" ("Violence" 6). Instances of personal violence are actions ranging from bar brawls to international wars. Conversely, violence without the subject-object relation is structural. Therefore, structural violence which Galtung refers alternatively as "social injustice" ("Violence" 6) "is built into the structure [of society], and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances." It could manifest as unequal distribution of resources, and the unequal distribution of the "power to decide over the distribution of resources" ("Violence" 6). Galtung's idea of resources, writes, Confortini, represent not only the material or economic, but also the nonmaterial, such as education, health care, etc (4). Further elaborating on the difference between personal and structural violence, Galtung notes that "when one husband beats his wife there is a clear case of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million wives in ignorance there is structural violence" ("Violence" 6). In addition, "Personal violence represents change and dynamism - not only ripples on waves, but waves on otherwise tranquil waters" while "structural violence is silent, it does not show - it is essentially static, it is the tranquil waters." However, this observation, by Galtung's assessment, is sometimes fluid depending on the kind of society involved. Thus, "In a static society, personal violence will be registered, whereas structural violence may be seen as about as natural as the air around us. Conversely: in a highly dynamic society, personal violence may be seen as wrong and harmful but still somehow congruent with the order of things, whereas structural violence becomes apparent because it stands out like an enormous rock in a creek, impeding the free flow, creating all kinds of eddies and turbulences" ("Violence" 8).

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Cultural violence, on its part, represents “those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence - exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics) – that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence” (“Cultural Violence” 2). Galtung argues that cultural violence makes direct and structural violence look, even feel, right - or at least not wrong” (Cultural Violence 2). In other words, cultural violence represents the ways by which acts of personal and structural violence are validated and made acceptable by a society. “One way cultural violence works” writes Galtung, “is by changing the moral color of an act from red/wrong to green/right or at least to yellow/acceptable; an example being 'murder on behalf of the country as right, on behalf of oneself wrong'. Another way is by making reality opaque, so that we do not see the violent act or fact, or at least not as Violent” (Cultural Violence 2). Summing up Galtung’s typology and theory of violence, Catia Confortini concludes that Galtung’s personal violence is violence *with* a subject, while his structural violence is violence *without* a subject, and his cultural violence a legitimization of both personal and structural violence (“Violence, and Gender” 4).

Michel Foucault’s Notion of Power

Power has been conceived in diverse ways including the idea that it is fixed and static and is wielded by the elite and those in authority. Other perceptions of power is that it is spiritual in addition to being physical. Nevertheless, Michel Foucault has stimulated a novel perspective to viewing power. His conception of power differs from its understanding as an instrument of coercion by a few privileged individuals who happen to occupy a place of authority. He rather asserts that “power is everywhere,” diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault 1991; Rabinow 1991). According to Gaventa, Foucault’s view of power “...marks a radical departure from previous modes of conceiving power and cannot be easily integrated with previous ideas, as power is diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them’ (1).

Foucault confronts the notion that power is wielded by people or groups by way of ‘episodic’ or ‘sovereign’ acts of domination or coercion. For Foucault, power is dispersed and pervasive which is why he opined that ‘Power is everywhere’ and ‘comes from everywhere’ (Foucault 1998: 63). It pervades society and is in constant mutation and negotiation. Foucault uses the term “power/knowledge” implying that power is established through assented forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and ‘truth’:

Foucault sees power as not just negative, but also a productive and positive force in society. In his words, “We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (*Discipline* 194). Significant about Foucault’s approach to power is that it goes beyond politics and sees power as an everyday, socialized and embodied phenomenon. The implication of Foucault’s theory for the present study is the diffusion of power noticed in the literary text under investigation.

Postcolonial Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is a division of cultural and literary Studies. It investigates the depictions of the world of humans and other unexplored aspects like animals and non-animated worlds. It is a study which emerged in North America. Today, it has evolved to include literature in its scope hence, it is seen as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Garrard 61; Hiltner 1). It is also cover term for ways of exploring the relationship between

humans and non-humans (Marland 846). What inspired the study is the increasing destruction of the biosphere by man's effort and the "ecocidal attitudes" of man (Garrard 61).

Raymond Williams avers that Nature is a complex vocabulary (219), standing for the "essence of things," human and non-human. It was between the 1960s and 1990s that the first-wave Ecocritics tried to recapture the fundamental importance of Nature to the humanities. They studied such Romantic or modern "nature writers" like William Wordsworth and Henry David Thoreau and treated Nature as "other," while eulogizing "uncorrupted" untouched wilderness (Hiltner 1).

Ecocritics of the second-wave, that is postcolonial ecocritics, established a better and more intricate understanding of Nature. They examine the entwinement of Nature study with such fields as gender and sexuality, race, class, or species, and have today extended their frontiers to include concerns of migration, hybridity, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism (Heise 18) as opposed to First-wave Ecocritics who were focused mainly on human attachment to place. Therefore, Postcolonial Ecocriticism emphasizes that colonialism is concerned not merely with human history but also the physical environment especially the changes it has had to grapple with and of course the movement of animals, plants and resources.

Postcolonial Ecocriticism has as well provided understanding of how the current climate crisis is connected with narratives, histories, and material practices of colonialism and globalization (Deloughrey, Didur and Carrigan 2). It has also highlighted the history of systemic violence induced by certain cultures and the state of indigenous lands and cultures like the Niger Delta and the histories of colonial presence which has become a metaphor for the negative intersectional relationship between man and environment.

5. Resource Control and the Reciprocity of Violence in *Dance of the Delta*

It is important to begin this section by observing that what Uzo Nwamara has done in *Dance of the Delta* is not a dramatization of any of the existing notions of resource control outlined earlier in this study. It is rather an enunciation of a novel notion which we here christen *domestic resource control*. This new notion does not involve the federal government of Nigeria whom, in the earlier versions, is considered the aggressor because she is in control of the contentious resources. It would be observed that in the existing notions, all the aggression is targeted at wresting the control of Niger Delta resources from the federal government of Nigeria. On the contrary, domestic resource control excludes the federal government from the equation but involves the triumvirate of multinational oil firms operating in the Niger Delta, a few influential opportunists from the Niger Delta stock and the rest of the beleaguered Niger Delta citizens involved in a violent tussle to gain control of resources of different kinds and degrees. The study seeks to establish that the desire to control these resources lie at the root of the myriad of reciprocal violent confrontations and situations inundating the plot of the play and perpetrated by the triad. Representing the oil companies is *Swampland Energy Exploitation Company Ltd* (henceforth Swampland Energy); standing for the few influential opportunists from the Niger Delta stock are the four greedy chiefs including Akpan, Wariso, Kalada and Tanure; and exemplifying the rest of the beleaguered Niger Delta citizens are Chief Eziokwu (Ojo-ofor),

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Elders Timi, Fubara and Wigwe and the youths headed by Chief Eziokwu's son, Ikem. Each of these groups is a repository of a level of power (sometimes reactionary) which they wield at different stages in their struggle.

The play opens with Swampland Energy already operating in an unnamed Niger Delta community which serves as the single setting of the play. Like Nigeria's federal government, this oil firm is in charge of the oil business in the land including its prospecting, drilling, transportation and merchandising. Struggle for resource control to this oil firm means all efforts aimed at retaining its stranglehold on the oil enterprise while to the other two groups, resource control represents efforts at gaining control over the resources or funds accruing to their community from the company as its host in the lucrative oil business. It is the methods deployed by each of the groups in seeking to actualize its aim that constitute resource-related violence in the play. Examining Swampland Energy closely, one notices that it exerts more of structural violence on its victims than personal or physical violence. Structural violence, it would be recalled from Galtung's theory, is built into the structure of the society and manifests as unequal power, life chances, distribution of resources, and unequal distribution of the power to decide over the distribution of resources, including all forms of deliberate demeaning of the ordinary people by those who wield power. Considering these, it becomes obvious that structural violence subsumes within it such other types as emotional, psychological and even environmental violence as well as the violence of neglect and deprivation.

In most developing countries like Nigeria, multinational companies exert so much influence on the local population and control over its resources. The adverse effects of these companies' operations on their host communities are hardly punished because of the financial gains accruing to their instituting governments. Instead of being regulated by the hosting government, these companies' hazardous operations are accorded constitutional backing hence, they are accorded the constitutional right to wield unusual power against any opposition including their host communities. Such is the fate of Nigeria's Niger Delta region which hosts an array of multinational oil firms scrambling for the crude and gas deposits in her soil. As the representative multinational oil firm in *Dance of the Delta*, Swampland Energy exerts the same kind of control over the crude oil resource of its Niger Delta host community. The playwright recognizes the violent impacts of the company operations hence his deliberate choice of words in christening it. Of particular significance in this regard is the word "exploitation" whose first meaning is "the use of land, oil and minerals of a place", and second meaning is "the treatment of someone or something in such a way as is unfair and with the intention of making money out of them" (*Oxford* 407-408). Both meanings are critical to a rounded understanding of the company's role as a truly violent organization, for it, indeed, uses the land, oil and minerals of its Niger Delta host community to make massive wealth and in return treats this host unfairly. Because the impacts of these actions against the Niger Delta are often indirect, subtle and delayed, they are misconstrued as not posing as much danger as the other forms of violence which are direct, physical and obviously impactful.

Perhaps most easily recognizable among the violent effects of Swampland Energy's operations on its Niger Delta host community is that of environmental degradation. Whether from the drilling procedure proper or by the inadvertent rupturing of oil pipelines, the seeming unavoidable spilling of crude oil by Swampland Energy contaminates the people's source of drinking water and food supply. In the following excerpt, Chief Tanure alludes to the fact while addressing Mr. Brown, the company's Base Manager:

CHIEF TANURE: What did you say? Do you mean that you have caused environmental pollution again? Our waters! Our fishes! Our farms! What will our people drink? Where will they get fish from? Another harsh period of scarcity of food! What nonsense! (35)

Ato Qayson recalls that this violence against the Niger Delta environment lay at the heart of Ken Saro-Wiwa's struggle. According to him, the late environmentalist "argued that the pollution of his people's lands would have a more profound impact than anything that had ever happened in Nigeria's entire history. And he was right. There are oil polluted lands in [South-Southern] Nigeria that cannot be cultivated for food for the next thousand years. It represents an environmental devastation of near-apocalyptic proportions" (1). Related to environmental pollution and degradation is resource depletion which in itself is violence against nature and the ecosystem. M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham record that "In the twentieth century, the warnings by scientists and conservationists" concerning violence against the ecology "increased" and that Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), for instance, drew attention to the ominous degradation of the environment while Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) warned of the "devastation inflicted by newly developed chemical pesticides on wildlife, both on land and in water" (87). Going further, the duo note that "By the latter part of the century there was a widespread realization that the earth was in an environmental crisis, brought on by the industrial and chemical pollution of the 'biosphere' (the thin layer of earth, water, and air essential to life), the depletion of forests and of natural resources, the relentless extinction of plant and animal species, and the explosion of the human population beyond the capacity of the earth to sustain it (87). The implication of the above is that the operations of Swampland Energy and the likes in the Niger Delta amounts to violence against the ecosystem and the effects of this, conservationists may argue, outweigh whatever financial gains that may accrue from it. The resultant damage of such an ecological carnage in the Niger Delta becomes even more devastating when one considers that its direct victims are the least beneficiaries of its financial accretment.

In addition to degrading its environment, Swampland Energy also manipulates its host population emotionally and psychologically for the same purpose of maintaining its strong hold on the Niger Delta resources. First, it pits the people against themselves by creating a class distinction among them. Here lies the emergence and significance of the four rich and influential but greedy chiefs amidst the entire population of poor folks. The success of this divide-and-rule strategy of Swampland Energy is graphically portrayed in the following exchange between 1st and 3rd YOUTHS:

1st YOUTH: I saw all the chiefs today arriving at Chief Akpan's palace with their new Land Cruiser jeeps and their thugs were busy shooting into the air. These are the second replacements since the first set they got from the oil company. Boy, come and see money! Man, money is good o!

3rd YOUTH: Come on, stop envying evil! That is blood money! God will punish them and their children! Their palaces shine like daylight at night while the entire community swims in darkness and their boreholes are gushing out portable water. My sister went fetch water yesterday, but she was beaten into coma by a thug for aspiring above her class. (46)

While the exchange of both youths reveals the wickedness of the oil firm, the playwright also uses it to underline the need for a revolution as the only means of upturning not just the influence of the opportunistic chiefs but the hegemony of Swampland Energy. It is also significant that while one of the dialoguing youths betrays ignorance and admiration for the wealth of the wicked lot, the other shows awareness and anger against the situation. Such awareness and anger are required for consciousness raising as a prerequisite for a successful revolution. The playwright's choice of the youth in this regard is also significant for with them lies that future of egalitarianism which the revolution foreshadowed by the above dialogue hopes to establish.

Second, Swampland Energy manipulates its monster-agents (the greedy chief) to actualize its aim of withholding infrastructural developmental from its host community against the provisions of most operational agreements between multinational firms and their host communities. In spite of the enormous wealth accruing to it from the oil business in the Niger Delta, Swampland Energy is unwilling to contribute to the development of its host community. The aim may be to avoid future challenges to its hegemony in the oil business given that infrastructural development breeds enlightenment. Ironically particular about its image and the need to be seen as meaning well for the same community that it actually despoils, the company fronts the chiefs in scuttling the developmental programmes. Chief Akpan and Chief Tanure's responses to the Project Manager's presentation are testimony to the success of this strategy which amounts to a psychological violence on the chiefs and their people and of course the violence of deprivation and neglect:

CHIEF AKPAN: ... But as you can see, our community is a rural one that needs to be led gradually into the light of the modern world. You know what is called culture shock; we would not like our people to be exposed to such massive attack of development to the detriment of our way of life. Much as we welcome modernity, we also guard against a sudden erosion of our values and ways of life. You talked about roads; we don't think that roads are what we need urgently now. As you can see even the old road that your company uses to your base here has brought us quite a number of troubles; we now see strange characters in our community. Our young girls are becoming mothers too soon; in fact, mothers without husbands. The road brought such evils, so we don't really need roads now. (19)

CHIEF TANURE: ... You have to be careful because classes and class interests must be maintained if you want to succeed here. E-e-e-m, before I forget, you people should make jeeps available to all chiefs, so that we can effectively keep an eye on the restless youths and the people. In a nutshell, we the chiefs and leaders of our people, have resolved that you monetize the cost of your development proposal and give us the money so that we can use it to give our people the kind of development they need. (20-21)

Beyond using it to forestall future opposition to its hegemony, this strategy also helps the company to save a huge chunk of the total sum that should have gone into the execution of the 7–point project plan of a good road, a well-equipped hospital, a market, twenty four units of borehole water supply, electrification, schools and employment opportunities for the youths in the company (17-18).

From Swampland Energy we come to the four greedy chiefs as the next dealers in resources-related violence in the play. As already hinted at, resource control to these chiefs equates appropriating all the funds accruing to the host communally from the oil firm. These funds enable the chiefs to maintain and sustain their bourgeois status and to clampdown on any form of rebellion against them and the company. The chiefs are involved in two out of the three broad Galtungian categories of violence, namely, structural and personal. As already known, the former incorporates within it the emotional, psychological, environmental, deprivation and neglect substrata. Ironically, the chiefs spare no one in their onslaught. In a reciprocal manner, they sabotage and blackmail their maker and pay master, Swampland Energy; deprive, neglect, threaten, intimidate and decimate their own people at the slightest provocation; and, of course, pollute and degrade their own local environment at will. The play's short and simple plot is inundated with these negative images of the devilish quartet. The playwright is, therefore, interested in ridiculing them hence his constant highlighting of these demons' despoliation of both their people and environment in the interest of aliens and their pockets. The contrast between them and those whom they claim to lead is foregrounded in the very first stage direction of the play as a way of showcasing the violent impact of their leadership on the people:

The front gate of a company, displaying the inscription, Swampland Energy Energy Exploitation Company Ltd, littered with assortment of traditional materials of protest; tender palm-fronds, fire, yam, white cock, etc si manned by Ikem and an *angry crowd of hungry-looking*, drum-beating, shouting and protesting youths carrying screaming placards... Later *some chiefs, richly dressed with walking-sticks, some picking their teeth*, emerge from the company whispering among themselves. One steps forward to address the protesters. (1, emphasis mine)

Notice that while the chiefs are happy, satisfied, robust and good-looking, the rest of their kinsmen are angry and hungry-looking thus revealing the former as leeches feeding fat off the common wealth of both parties, and the latter as victims of the leeches' carnage. The scene of action in front of Swampland Energy oil-company is also aimed at portraying the oil company as partners in the violence against the very source of their wealth.

As already stated, the monster chiefs are like the he-goat on heat who cannot differentiate between mother and other she-goats. Very often, the oil company is, ironically, at the receiving end of the viciousness of the monsters it created. When in need of money, the greedy chiefs blackmail their pay masters through different acts of sabotage. In such situations, one appreciates the irony of evildoing and the truth inherent in the proverbial provoked houseboy who resorts to

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maiming his wicked master's favourite goat since he cannot match his master strength with strength. The play dramatises different instances whereby the evil chiefs gain psychological control over Swampland Energy by instilling fear in its hierarchy through the kidnapping of their expatriate staff members and vandalizing their oil pipelines using, in the words of Chief Akpan, "our boys" (34). 3rd YOUTH affirms the chiefs' complicity in this evil when he tells one of their (the chiefs') thugs, "we heard that the chiefs arranged the pipeline vandalization and kidnapping because of greed" (49). It would be recalled that psychological violence represents the gaining of control over someone by instigating fear in them through threats. The psychosomatic impact of the situation is partly conveyed in the Base Manager's description of it as "a couple of *urgent problems* at hand" (33 emphasis mine). By the above, Nwamara hints at the dynamics of oil politics and crime in the Niger Delta. He suggests that much of the oil-related crimes in the region are aimed at self-aggrandizement rather than the development of the Niger Delta region as touted in the media; and that the negative activities of the youths which pollute the environment and also cast the region in bad light are actually instigated by a few influential citizens of the region to further enrich themselves. As a means of supporting this claim and also revealing how abysmally low the chiefs' moral standards have fallen, Nwamara x-rays a ransom negotiation proceeding involving them and Swampland Energy's Base Manager who announced the kidnap:

CHIEF WARISO: What a shame! These boys are becoming too cheap these days! What are you waiting for, to pay them? You are lucky. The former company paid fifty million dollars to get back their white man. Of course they paid so much because they did not go through the right channel, the authentic channel. We are the authentic leaders of our community and we know how to get things done here. (34)

CHIEF AKPAN: "We shall bring him back. You know these agitators; these boys calling for resource control must be behind this. Never mind, *they are our boys. They do what we tell them.* They must be loyal to succeed in their agitation." (35)

The psychological violence perpetrated by the chiefs against their own people conflates with the physical. The physical is foreshadowed by the psychological through the device of Ikem's dream of a fight between his father's dog and those of the criminal chiefs. The psychosomatic effect of the dream on Ikem's mother is the goose-pimples it spreads on her body (16) while its physical impact is the killing of Chief Eziokwu, the burning of his house and the dispersing of his family members thus creating fear in the entire community. 2nd YOUTH is to the point when he observes, "We are a conquered people. This community is like a garrison. In fact, we live in a conquered territory" (45). The same mercenaries prosecute all the chiefs' act of mayhem but effect circumstantial changes in appearance by means of hoods. The youth identify some of the hooded thugs as the children of the chiefs themselves, thus underscoring Chief Akpan's earlier description of them as "our boys."

The arson scene climaxes violence in the play. Its horror is particularly significant as the most disturbing violent scene in the play:

NIGHT

A dark eerier night: No moon. No stars. No night sounds, just eerie silence intermittently broken by hooting of owls. Some dark hooded figures bearing

gallons and clubs edge towards Chief Eziokwu's house. They douse it with petrol, set it ablaze and wait. Cries of, Fire! Fire! Papa e! Mama e! My lord! My lord! Etc. are heard. Suddenly children scramble out of the burning house crying. A figure hits one with a club and she screams and falls.

CHIEF EZIOKWU: (Emerging from the fire, reeling and coughing hard)

Ego! Where is this woman and her children? Ego! I didn't know these greedy bastards meant business! I never knew they would be this desperate! The gods of our land will expose them! Ego! Ego! Ego where are you! Ego where are my children? (*Suddenly the hooded figures descended on him with clubs, he cries out and falls, they kick and beat him until he stops moving. They hurl him into the burning house, he lets out blood-chilling scream and they walk away.*) (26-27)

It is, however, not surprising that this most heinous act of violence in the play assumes the personal or physical dimension. It is common knowledge that violence is more obvious and impactful when it is physical hence the arson's positioning as the final trigger of the play's imminent revolution. Moreover its victimizing of the most important family, the source of strength and rallying point of the downtrodden, makes a revolutionary response even more likely.

The third group which is the beleaguered Niger Delta citizens is a group up resource control revolutionaries. Their approach is communal and reactionary. They stand for the truth in their fight against two common foes, namely, their wicked leaders (the greedy chiefs) and the oil firm colluding with their leaders to keep the Niger Delta and its people perpetually in a deplorable condition. Their demonstration at the front of the oil firm depicts their fight against the oil firm, but their main enemy is their wicked, greedy and selfish leaders who have so decimated them for daring to ask questions about their own resources; who have killed their best personnel and leader (Chief Eziokwu) for agitating for a better Niger Delta; for requesting that the right thing be done.

Thus, the playwright advocates counter violence as the best response to these merchants of violence although that of the people is just and aimed at eliminating the few enemies of the Niger Delta people and community. Thus, for the first time in the play, we come to a group whose pattern of violence is only personal or physical hence direct rather than structural and indirect, and whose goal is communal good rather than selfish ends. Because their foes are physically brutal, the people engage in armed counter-confrontation against them, and it is not surprising that the people (represented by the youths) triumph over the chiefs as a sign of proletarian victory over capitalist oppression; and the supplanting of the greedy and wicked capitalist regime with egalitarianism although bought at a great cost. The killing of Chief Akpan, the leader and symbol of evil in the land, is quite symbolic of that victory, hence the reign of freedom over intimidation and terror:

They descend on Chief Akpan with clubs and sticks; he is lynched as the Revolutionaries, led by Ikem, shooting into the air and carrying placards with

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various inscriptions and fire join and set the bodies on fire. They dance around the burning bodies singing and chanting freedom songs as the firing continues. Suddenly, there is a louder firing and chanting coming from another direction. The action on stage freezes, there is total silence. The lights come with full intensity, go dim, come again, go dim, come again and is followed by a total black out.) (54)

Ending the play with a proletarian victory depicts the author's identification with the common people of the Niger Delta. One could actually feel his wishes for a day when the people will reclaim their resources or, at least, acquire the right to control it irrespective of the means deployed in the process including violence. He, indeed, appears to advocate for violence as the only means of responding to the violence of the oppressors of the Niger Delta people and indeed in actualizing resource control.

Conclusion

This study has explored the concept of resource control and violence in Uzo Nwamara's *Dance of the Delta*. The play espouses a new notion of resource control, domestic resource control, which excludes the federal government from the power play. The study has identified three actors in this saga: multinational oil companies, selfish and influential Niger Delta leaders, and the rest of the citizens of the region. The study has observed that violence is inevitable in any resource control agitation, and this is evident in the emotional, psychological, environmental, deprivation, neglect, and physical violence that predominate the agitation processes of the different stakeholders. The study has also observed that violence in the play is reciprocal, with each group targeting the other. Finally, the author's lack of neutrality is evident, with the author appearing to identify with the revolutionary actions of the ordinary Niger Delta folks against the oppressors. In conclusion, this study highlights the complexities of resource control and violence and their interconnection in the Niger Delta.

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