



AN ECOCRITICAL READING OF FEMI OJO-ADE'S *LES PARADIS TERRESTRES*

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to critically examine Femi Ojo-Ade's migrature/diasporic novel, *Les paradis terrestres*, using the ecocritical concepts of monoculture of the mind, zoocriticism, ecomelancholia and slow violence. The sociological approach is also used. It is established that Ojo-Ade condemns racism and other forms of discrimination against Blacks as typified in Ayo Aboudou, the hero. It is also established that some characters in the novel serve as the author's surrogates in expressing deep adoration and love for the blackman's skin, Black-man and the ecosystems of Africa and Songhai. In this way, the novelist debunks the prevailing idea in the fictional world that the West - represented by the fictional countries Civilisation and Concorde - has more conducive environment and is a paradise on earth. The end of the novel shows these countries as hell on earth for Black people who migrate to them. Another finding of this study is the replacement of colonialism by neo-colonialism. Thanks to the application of Nixon's "slow violence", it is found that the newly formed bourgeois in the era of neo-colonialism has gradually exacerbated the former colonial masters' inhumanity to man. The ecomelancholia of the protagonist Ayo is evident as he mourns the cumulative losses concerning his natural environment (Africa in general and Songhai in particular) - the Whiteman's pillage of his home country's natural resources, which contributes to environmental pollution.

Keywords: ecocriticism, monoculture of the mind, zoocriticism, ecomelancholia, racism, ecophobia.

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Introduction

“On trouve dans des oeuvres littéraires des discours environnementaux” (Onyemelukwe, *L’écocritique* 54).

Environmental discourses are found in some literary Works.

Writers (French, English, African) manifest varying degrees of interest in depicting the natural environment in an interactive way in their creative works. Studies which focus, in an interdisciplinary manner, on literature and environment are regarded as ecocritical studies. This is ecocriticism, also known as “Green Literature.” Classic examples of ecocritical works are: Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio’s novel *Onitsha*, David Diop’s poem “Afrique”, Albert Camus’ play *L’étranger*, Bernard Dadié’s novel *Un nègre à Paris* and Alain Mabanckou’s novel *Verre cassé*. The present study examines critically Femi Ojo-Ade’s first novel in French, *Les paradis terrestres* using selected ecocritical concepts: monoculture of the mind, zoocriticism, ecomelancholia and slow violence. The sociological approach is also used.

Ojo-Ade, after retiring from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, got himself established for good in Maryland. There, he continued his writing career as an immigrant just like other migritude writers (Sami Tchak and Kossi Efoui from Togo, Alain Mabanckou, Daniel Biyaoula, Emmanuel Boundzéki Dongola and Tierno Monémbo from Congo Brazzaville, Abdourahmane Ali Waberi from Djibouti, Bessora from Gabon, Fatou Diome from Senegal and Calixthe Beyala from Cameroon); and diasporic writers (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Uzodinma Iweala from Nigeria), he uses his pen to fight against racism and other forms of discrimination suffered by African immigrants in the West. This background justifies Ojo-Ade’s ranking in this article as a migritude writer. Jacques Chevrier invented the term “Migritude” to describe a new generation of writers from Sub-Saharan Black Africa (Afrique(s)-sur-Seine), who have migrated to Europe and America and continued their writing career over there just as earlier stated. Lila Azam Zanganeh views migritude as a literary movement and affirms that the coinage is made up of two words: *négritude* and *émigration* (The New York Times). For Onyemelukwe, migritude is the new direction in African Literature and it is characterised by immigration and identity (“Migritude” 148-165). Onyemelukwe and Odeh see migritude as: “un humanisme du XXIe siècle” (18) (a 21st Century Humanism).

Ojo-Ade has been described in several literary critical works as one of the Nigerian writers of French Expression (Onyemelukwe, *The French Language* 94; Mokwenye 12; Ajiboye 5 and Onyemelukwe, *Histoire* 19). His novel *Les paradis terrestres*, has been classified in the cited works as part of Nigerian Literature in French just as Ifeoma Onyemelukwe’s *Uwaoma et le beau monde* published the same year 2003 and *Shango suivi du Roi Elephant* published in 1968 by Ola Balogun, the first Nigerian writer of French Expression. According to Onyemelukwe, these works belong to the first category of Nigerian Literature in French since they are originally produced in French, unlike the works in the second category. She ranked them as second category by virtue of their having been translated into French from whatever language they were originally produced in (*Histoire* 20-21). Works found in this second category are Chinua Achebe’s *Le monde s’effondre* (1966) being Michel Ligny’s translation into French of *Things Fall Apart*, Oladeju Okediji’s *Catastrophe au rendez-vous* (2003) being

Tunde Ajiboye's translation into French of R  rerun and Amos Tutuola's *L'ivrogne dans la brousse* (1953) being Raymond Queneau's translation into French of *The Palmwine Drinker* (Onyemelukwe, *Histoire* 53-55).

The study will first take a cursory look at the life and works of Femi Ojo-Ade. Next is a succinct description of the study text. The theoretical background will follow before embarking on an in-depth ecocritical analysis of *Les paradis terrestres*, to end with a conclusion.

Life and works of Femi Ojo-Ade

Femi Ojo-Ade was born in Lagos in Nigeria on 23rd July, 1941. He started learning French while in Primary School. He had his PhD in French Literature. He also studied and was fluent in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian; apart from his mother tongue, Yoruba. He became a full Professor of French at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-ife in 1980. Retired from this university in 1991, he migrated finally to the United States of America. There, the Professor Emeritus worked as Professor of Francophone Studies (teaching Luso-Brazilian, Yoruba and African Diasporic Studies). He was the Director of Programme of Studies on Africa and the Diaspora at St. Mary's College of Maryland (Onyemelukwe, *The French Language* 256-257).

This widely travelled erudite scholar, cultural and literary critic was a poet, playwright, essayist, short-story writer and novelist and had to his credit many articles and essays and over 25 books of critical and literary creativity. His novel in English *One little Girl's Dreams* got him decorated with the MATATU Prize for Children's Literature by the Association of Nigerian Authors in 1999. Femi Ojo-Ade's works include: *Being Black, being Human: More Essays on Black Culture* (2004), *The Almond Tree* (novel), *Home, Sweet, Sweet Home* (poetry)(1998), *Black Gods* (short stories) (2002) and *Dead End* (novel) (2001) (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/carts/oj>). Femi Ojo-Ade was a naturalised U.S. citizen. This distinguished Professor passed on in 2019 (<https://educeleb.com/tribute/fe>).

Synopsis of *Les paradis terrestres*

The novel's protagonist, Ayo Aboudou, pursues his studies in a fictional country called Concorde. He visits his cousin in another fictional neighbouring country called Civilisation. He goes through a lot of negative experiences, especially racism and other forms of discrimination. His relationship with a white girl, Annette, nearly costs him his life. He breaks off with Annette and falls in love with a Black Caribbean girl, Marie, whom he gives the African name Amina. He returns with her to his home country Songhaï which, from all indications, seems to represent Nigeria. Concorde seems to reflect Canada while Civilisation seems to represent USA. Songhaï is under the dictatorial rule of General Sawaba, whose reign of terror is waxing stronger all over the country. Ayo's family is particularly affected negatively. His father, a principled and patriotic man, who refuses to comply with the dictator to set free latter's brother involved in a crime attracting a death sentence, is forced into early retirement; his brother Ade, who trained in Russia with Russian scholarship is being trailed, suspected of dissident communist actions; while his sister Mila turns down the dictator's request to marry him. Even his ardent desire to contribute his quota to nation building by getting employment as a Songhaïan diplomat is frustrated. Worse still, as soon as Ayo's father dies, the dictator unleashes his hammer of oppression on

all members of Ayo's family. Ayo is compelled to flee for his life with his wife Marie, migrating once more to Concorde. There, problems associated with adaptation and integration into the foreign land orchestrate a physical violence that culminates in his aggressor's eventual death. This tragic event leads to his imprisonment. While in prison, he takes his life.

Theoretical Background: Ecocriticism

"Ecocriticism" is a term derived from two words eco- and -criticism. The word ecocriticism was invented by William Rueckert. In his essay, "Literature and Ecology: an Experiment in Ecocriticism," he tries to demonstrate the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm define "Ecocriticism" as: "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment (xviii). Ecocriticism is the study of literature and the environment from an interdisciplinary viewpoint as researchers in literature create and analyse relevant texts. Simon Estok conceptualizes the term in a more global way. He does not view ecocriticism simply as the study of nature and natural things in literature. To him, ecocriticism refers instead to all theories which are committed to effecting changes while analyzing the functions - thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical and others - of the natural environment or of the aspects represented in some documents (literature or others) which contribute to material practices in the material world (16-17). Estok's definition of ecocriticism is found most relevant to the present study. We need recall that ecocriticism is an umbrella term embracing a variety of approaches. For carrying out this research, we shall have recourse to some ecocritical approaches, namely: monoculture of the mind, zoocriticism, ecomelancholia and slow violence. We shall also make use of the sociological approach.

Monoculture of the mind propounded by Vandana Shiva treats diversity as a disease and creates coercive structures aiming at remodelling our biologically and culturally diversified world on the basis of privileged class, race and gender of one species. The society is conceptualized as a monoculture of wheat, implying thus that such society is homogenous targeting a unique race, a unique thought and an exceptional preoccupation. Monoculture of the mind is found useful in analyzing things like racism, assimilation and deculturation in a postcolonial discourse (Onyemelukwe, "L'écocritique" 56).

Zoocriticism advocates the preservation of wild beasts in order to prevent the extinction of certain species. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, the proponents of zoocriticism, maintain that the history of Western racism with its discourse on specificity, the use of animals for measuring social division and particularly the use of derogatory beastly terms on individuals in the discourses on genocide and marginalisation (133) make it difficult to discuss animals without generating a profound uneasiness in several postcolonial contexts today. Postcolonial discourses are characterised by the use of animal categorisation and derogatory beastly metaphors in situations of racism and sexism. Take, for example, in war novels such as Véronique Tadjo's *L'ombre d'Imana: voyages jusqu'au bout du Rwanda* and Scholastique Mukasonga's *Inyenzi ou les cafards*, the Tutsi are called cockroaches (*inyenzi* in the local language and *les cafards* in French) and this derogatory beastly imagery is an attempt

at justifying the genocide against a human group or the marginalisation and discriminatory cruelty unleashed on a particular ethnic group in the ecosystem. Cockroaches are pests and deserve to be exterminated. Thus, zoocriticism becomes useful in analysing our study text.

Stephanie Le Menager, Teresa Shweryl and Ken Hiltner postulate ecomelancholia. This ecocritical concept dwells on the inability to stop lamenting over ecological losses of the past and present. The approach is necessary for examining cumulative losses regarding nature, earth, resources as well as trauma engendered by them, for example, death, displacement and exploitation. There is need to point out here that ecocriticism is committed to recognising the existence of ecophobia. It is also necessary to highlight that phenomena such as racism, misogyny, homophobia and speciesism are very well interwoven with it and with each other and need to be looked at together.

Ecocritical Analysis of *Les paradis terrestres*

The novel's story line opens with the discriminatory ill-treatment meted out to Ayo Aboudou in the consulate where he goes to obtain a visa to travel to Civilisation. First of all, the female secretary attending to him gazes at him "tout en feuilletant mon passeport accordé par ce pays en voie de développement (7) (While searching through my passport given by this developing country. My translation here and elsewhere in this work). Ayo, here, is talking about his country of origin, the fictional country Songhaï, which seems to represent Nigeria. She tells him to wait patiently, that he will be attended to. Ironically, she reappears only after one and half hours. Calling him "Monsieur Hibou" (name of a bird in French), an adulterated version of his surname Aboudou, she requests him to provide a letter from his university certifying that he is really a student of that university.

She expresses indirectly her fear of Ayo disappearing in Civilisation while on the visit as others have done in the past. Thus, she exhibits a certain homophobia in relation to Ayo. At the same time, she expresses her profound admiration and love for her own country's natural environment: "il faut bien le dire, tout le monde aimerait vivre chez nous où il y a la paix, le progrès, la justice, etc (8). (It must be admitted that everybody would want to live in our country where one has peace, progress, justice etc.). In reality, are people from all over the world, including Nigerians, not struggling to migrate to the USA? Jynnah Radford has rightly pointed out that: "The United States has more immigrants than any other country in the world." "Key findings about U.S immigrants" show that presently, over 40 million people resident in USA were born in another country, "accounting for about one-fifth of the world's migrants in 2017" (<https://www.pewresearch.org>>key). The data confirm our extrapolation on people from all over the world struggling to migrate to U.S in the following lines: "The population of immigrants is also very diverse, with just about every country in the world represented among U.S immigrants" (<https://www.pewresearch.org>>key).

While in the bus travelling to Liberty, the capital of Civilisation, Ayo reflects on racism suffered by the Blacks. The thought emanates from his reading of a sports magazine which narrates the extraordinary achievements of Blacks. While applauding such exploits of these extraordinary Black men, he laments that the white public refuses to accept them as human beings. Ayo recalls that in everyday life in Concord, Blacks are compelled to live in the margin of the society. They are victims of social

existence in the West where they are treated perpetually as outsiders. Ayo ruminates regrettably that the Blacks are simply there to entertain the whites (9) in areas like sports, for example, expert dribbling of football. Needless to say, the integration of Black immigrants in the West is quite problematic and most often, they do not enjoy the right to live as immigrants. Ayo is denied permanent residency permit several times in Concorde. As he narrates: « De retour en Concorde, je suis allé déposer ma demande pour devenir immigrant au bureau gouvernemental.... Malheureusement, je me suis trompé, comme d'habitude » (15) (On my return to Concorde, I submitted my application for Residency Permit to the government office.... Unfortunately, I was disappointed as usual). He notes that out of about fifty candidates in the waiting room, there were only two or three Blacks; the rest were Whites from other parts of the world. And still his application is turned down.

Why this racial discrimination against Blacks? Shiva's monoculture of the mind enables one understand that it is because they belong to a different race, have a different skin colour (black skin) and so are a different species of humans. The White people would prefer sameness, same race, colour, culture and language. They do not accommodate diversity. The White men are grappling with speciesism. To them, these Black men constitute a species that is subhuman.

It is, therefore, not surprising to find derogatory beastly terms used on Ayo, this Songhaïan in the West. Annette's mother abused Ayo as "Sale nègre ... barbare, mangeur de chair humaine ... sauvage ..." (65) (Dirty nigger ... barbarian, eater of human flesh ... savage). Even Annette's father Mr. Groënberg calls Ayo vagabond nigger (70). He also dubs him "Cabochard" (72) and nearly shot at him. In accordance with Huggan and Tiffin's postulation, zoocriticism enables one understand the use of derogatory terms in this novel for categorisation of the Black people. Describing the Black man as an animal or in terms of other derogatory terms highlighted here is to clearly discriminate against him in terms of racism and sexism. Henri, Ayo's roommate, once asked to see if he really has a tail (38). Again, this is to rank him well as an animal (monkey). He also wants to know if Africans really eat human flesh (38). Pierre, another Black student, remembers having been asked, some time ago, by a white friend, if he goes on a walk with a lion in his home and if he lives on trees (34). All these are still attempts to categorise the Black man as a beast. Pierre also once asked Ayo to tell him about his first fight with an elephant (38). Ayo admits himself that he feels like an animal from the zoo which everybody wants to study (52).

Is it any surprise that Ayo at the borders of Civilisation is stripped naked to be searched? Since considered an animal, does he require any respect of human dignity? Other passengers (Whites) are not given such humiliating treatment. That is the negative impact of his degrading, bastardised natural environment on him and his compatriots. Ayo's brother laments that the ecosystem is in utter shamble; *c'est la décadence!* (102). The proliferation of fraudulent acts like drug pushing among Nigerians at the turn of the Twentieth Century actually warranted stripping most Nigerian citizens naked at the airport and territorial borders to search for prohibited items like cocaine and other hard drugs which some individuals tend to hide even in their under clothing. It is quite an embarrassment to Ayo, who is, in this novel, reflecting Nigerians. Ojo-Ade does not hesitate to denounce this degrading, humiliating, inhuman practice, using Ayo as his mouthpiece:

Quels articles suspects étais-je censé avoir ? Il y avait dans l'autobus un jeune homme qui dodelinait constamment de la tête ; il y en avait un autre qui sentait vachement l'alcool Personne ne les gênait ; on les laissait tranquilles alors qu'on me tracassait de cette façon déshumanisante....Inutile de dire que les représentants de la grande nation nommée la Civilisation n'ont rien trouvé ; pas de drogues, pas d'héroïne, pas de cocaïne, absolument rien (12-13).

Which articles was I suspected to carry? A young man in the bus was constantly nodding the head; another was smelling badly of alcoholNobody was disturbing them; they were left alone whereas I was harassed in this dehumanizing manner.... Needless to say that the representatives of the great nation Civilisation did not find anything; no drugs, no heroin, no cocaine, nothing absolutely.

Ayo ponders in his heart that they were apparently searching for a criminal from his country(13). That notwithstanding, such a reason does not justify the degrading treatment given to him for, to his mind, all Nigerians cannot be criminals.

It is necessary to recall that a white lady who asks to share a seat with Ayo in the bus to Liberty calls him "salaud" (10) (Idiot). That is, after gliding her finger through Ayo's and the latter withdrawing his (10). She, probably, wanted to feel Ayo's finger to see what it is like, whether human or animal or like a stone. I had a somewhat similar experience in Murnau, West Germany in August 1975, when just about to enter a Departmental Store, a little White girl rushed from her mum and glided her finger over my right leg. Her mother cautioned her to stop when the deed had already been done. While on German Language immersion Programme, I found myself among the second batch of black students that had visited the town. I recall vividly their recurrent stares at us Blacks; an experience somewhat similar to Ayo's. Racial discrimination meted out to Ayo somewhat echoes that of the protagonist of Bernard Dadié's négritude novel, *Un nègre à Paris*.

Ojo-Ade depicts instances of racial discrimination repeatedly in *Les paradis terrestres*. The racial discrimination against the Blacks, especially against Ayo the only Black African/Songhaïan is such that landlords refuse to rent accommodation to them. When finally Ayo and his black friends get one, it is in the basement which symbolises the condition of the Black man over the centuries, notably, that of a slave bastardised, crushed under the feet of the White master (43). Ayo continues to suffer from discrimination even when he returns with his Caribbean fiancée to Songhaï. While attempting to see his cousin Adam in the office, he is kept waiting for hours while White men that come after him are allowed to climb up. Even in his home country, the White men receive better treatment than the Blacks. Even the type of job he desperately desires to have eludes him. He is discriminated against in the society.

Paradoxically, the Blacks that are despised in the West and their environment discredited in *Les paradis terrestres* are depicted in the same novel in utter adoration by some White persons. Ojo-Ade first uses a small White boy of about 12 years as his spokesman to appreciate the beauty of the Blackman, which under the present circumstance happens to be Ayo: « Je l'aime bien.... Regarde-le, maman. Comme sa peau est lisse et brillante ! J'aimerais avoir une peau comme ça, au lieu d'avoir à passer tout le temps à me faire brûler au soleil antillais. Maman, je ne t'y accompagnerai plus. Donne-moi une peau pareille à celle-là » (19) (I like him very much.... Look at him

mum. How his skin is polished and shining. I would like to have a skin like that, instead of having to pass all the time in burning myself in Caribbean sun. Mum, I shall not accompany you there anymore. Give me a skin like this one).

Notice, while adoring and praising the Black man's skin, the White boy goes on to divulge his fear of his home country's natural environment; the fear he has for lying constantly in the sun in his home country Antilles to get his skin tanned. He tells his mother he will not like to accompany her to that place anymore. The fear he has for his environment/environmental elements makes him shed tears. Yet Antilles is portrayed as a superior ecological environment to Africa and people from there are depicted as superior Blacks to Black Africans in the study text. What a paradox!

Ojo-Ade, further, uses Annette, a White lady to express admiration for the African/Songhaïan ecological system. Annette loves with passion the Blackman and his natural environment. Thus she ends up marrying Henry, a Jamaican after failing to get Ayo to marry her and take her to Songhaï (64, 76-77). A Jamaican lady, Marie, is equally used by Ojo-Ade to express deep love and adoration for not only African/Songhaïan natural environment but also African/Songhaïan people: «Après les noces, on ira en Afrique ; j'en ai marre de cette société folle. Emmène-moi, Ayo, il faut m'emmener de cet enfer le plus tôt possible » (85) (After our wedding, we shall go to Africa, I am fed up with this mad society. Take me, Ayo, you must take me out of this hell as quickly as possible). When Ayo suggests their staying a bit longer in Concorde before going to Africa, Marie makes this important observation: "Si tu m'aimes, tu ne vas pas insister pour demeurer dans ce pays raciste et impérialiste.... Tu vois, chez moi,...j'avais souffert à cause de ma couleur. J'ai été victime de la même bêtise lorsque j'ai voyagé en Civilisation. C'est pire par ici puisqu'on ne te dit pas exactement ce qu'on pense de toi" (85) (If you love me, you will not insist on remaining in this racist and imperialist country. You see, in my country I had suffered because of my colour. I was a victim of the same stupid act when I travelled to Civilisation. It is worse here (Concorde) as they do not tell you exactly what they feel about you).

Even when Ayo tries to dissuade Marie, telling her the realities on the ground, the problems in Songhaï which are even worse than those in Concorde, she still insists on going: "Je préfère mourir chez mes ancêtres que de vivre en sous-être chez les Blancs" (85) (I prefer to die in the place of my ancestors than to live as a subhuman being in the Whiteman's land). The derogatory term, "subhuman being" is used by the author to disclose the suffering of even African Americans at that time under the heavy yoke of racial discrimination. Thus, Amina, an African American, would prefer living in Songhaï in liberty/freedom to living in Concorde reflecting Canada and Civilisation reflecting USA, where she is treated as a subhuman being, where she suffers visibly from racial discrimination. What emerges clearly here is that Blacks, whether Africans or African Americans, suffer from racism and other forms of discrimination in Concorde and Civilisation. Africans also suffer back home in Africa from problems even worse than those in the West. We, therefore, conclude that none of the three major countries depicted in *Les paradis terrestres* is a paradise on earth. Ojo-Ade is, by this title, making an ironic reference to USA, Canada, and by implication other countries in the West such as France, Germany, Great Britain, which young Africans tend to view as paradise on earth and dream to migrate to so as to succeed

in life. The migritude writer, Ojo-Ade, has a vital message for humanity: Far from being an earthly paradise, these Western countries are hell on earth especially for African immigrants and so Africans should desist from migrating to the West but should instead stay back in their various countries and try by all means to develop them. Ojo-Ade is precisely saying in the words of Voltaire: "Cultivons notre jardin!"

It is pertinent to note that Amina is ignorant of the fact that in Africa, colonialism has only been replaced by neo-colonialism which is even worse; that the new bourgeoisie only succeeded in perpetuating inhumanity of their White predecessors (85). Slow violence, propounded by Richard Nixon, enables one decipher the effects (sometimes invisible but perceptible) of destruction of the environment and particularly of the African environment and the indigenous population under colonialism. With time, it is found that the newly formed bourgeois in the era of neo-colonialism has gradually exacerbated the former colonial masters' inhumanity to man.

Ojo-Ade also throws into relief the ecomelancholia of the hero, Ayo. Cowardly by nature and faced by Annette's father with a pistol, Ayo summons courage and faces his adversary, who reminds him of former colonial masters of his home country. Ayo laments over how the former colonial masters plundered African natural resources in those years and ruined the natural environment : « Courage mon vieux, courage; il faut tenir bon devant cet ennemi qui doit te rappeler ces colonisateurs dévergondés d'antan qui avaient dévasté les pays de tes aïeux et prostitué les cultures de la société » (71). What Ayo is mourning here is cumulative losses concerning his natural environment in Songhaï/ Africa - Whiteman's pillage of his home country's natural resources and decolonization of the country's cultural and linguistic values with long term negative effects on his environment and people: environmental pollution and endangerment of autochthonous African languages following inferiority complex and disloyalty with regard to mother tongue use and impending death of many African indigenous languages if appropriate corrective measures are not taken. His country, as described by his brother Ade, is facing total decay (102). Ayo's ecomelancholia, here, seems to translate that of the diasporic/migritude novelist.

Conclusion

Femi Ojo-Ade ranks among Nigerian writers of French Expression. His diasporic/migritude novel *Les paradis terrestres*, in this study, is critically examined using the ecocritical approaches of monoculture of the mind, zoocriticism, ecomelancholia and slow violence. The study establishes that he uses some characters in the novel to express deep adoration and love for the Blackman's skin and ecosystem of Africans/Songhaïans. It is found that he condemns racism and other forms of discrimination against Blacks as typified in the protagonist Ayo Aboudou. It is also established that Blacks, whether Africans or African Americans, suffer from racism and other forms of discrimination in Concorde and Civilisation. It is equally established that Africans are confronted with problems even worse than those in the West in Africa. This finding leads us to conclude that none of the three major countries depicted in the study text is a paradise on earth. It would seem, therefore, that Ojo-Ade uses the title *Les paradis terrestres* to make an ironic reference to USA, Canada and by implication, other countries of the West, which young Africans tend to view as

paradise on earth and dream to migrate to so as to succeed in life. The migritude writer Ojo-Ade has an important message for humanity. He is sounding a note of caution for young Africans to desist from migratory adventures to the West as the West, far from being an earthly paradise is hell for them. Ayo mourns cumulative losses vis-à-vis his natural environment in Songhai – the Whiteman's pillage of his home country's natural resources contributing to environmental pollution. His ecomelancholia, here, is indicative of the novelist's own.

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