

Eco-theatre and Environmental Ethics in Rudolph Kansese's *Obeseri (Rumble in the Wild)*: Reimagining Performance for a Sustainable Future

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Abstract: *This paper addressed the lack of critical engagement with ecological ethics in Nigerian theatre, despite the country's worsening environmental crises. Using "Obeseri: Rumble in the Wild" by Rudolph Kansese as a case study, the study applied Una Chaudhuri's theories of Geo-pathology and Species thinking to examine how performance can move from raising awareness to provoking moral reflection on environmental loss. Employing qualitative and textual analysis, the study interprets Obeseri as an eco-theatrical narrative that dramatizes the contradictions between cultural heroism and ecological collapse. It revealed the forest as a grieving entity and animals as ethical witnesses, thus challenging anthropocentric storytelling and reinforcing the moral complexity of traditional folklore. The study contributed to African performance scholarship by showing that Nigerian theatre rooted in ritual, myth, and communal ethics holds powerful potential for environmental advocacy. It recommended ecologically conscious set and costume design, dramaturgies grounded in indigenous knowledge, and performances that treat nature as an active presence. The article concluded that eco-theatre in Nigeria is both relevant and urgent, offering a creative and ethical platform for imagining a more sustainable future.*

Keywords: Eco-theatre, Environmental sustainability, Ethics, Dramatic performance, Folklore

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, Nigeria has witnessed escalating environmental challenges ranging from oil spills, deforestation, and erosion to unregulated waste disposal, flooding, and the effects of climate change. These crises are not isolated incidents but interconnected outcomes of unsustainable development, weak enforcement of environmental laws, and a widespread lack of ecological awareness. Across the Niger Delta, communities are suffocating under gas flares

and poisoned waterways. In urban centres, air and water pollution rise as industrial activities continue unchecked. These issues threaten not only the physical environment but also public health, food security, and cultural identity. While science and policy have traditionally dominated the discourse on environmental sustainability, there is a growing recognition of the role that culture and the arts, particularly theatre, can play in reshaping public consciousness and action. In Nigeria, theatre has long been used as a medium for social commentary and civic education. Increasingly, it is being reimagined as a tool for environmental advocacy. This is the focus of what scholars have termed eco-theatre, a form of performance that confronts ecological issues through culturally rooted dramatic expressions.

Helen Aghamelu's community theatre project, Ukwu Orji Market Palava, exemplified this approach. Her work demonstrated how participatory theatre, grounded in local narratives and everyday experiences, can foster community-led environmental change. By engaging traders, transport workers, and environmental officials in dialogue through performance, the project addressed issues such as sanitation, waste management, and public responsibility, ultimately inspiring real-world behavioural shifts. As Aghamelu (2022) noted that theatre's ability to emotionally and intellectually involve people makes it a powerful platform for mobilising action at the grassroots level.

Similarly, Abdurashheed Adeoye's study of eco-theatre situates Nigerian drama within the broader global conversation on climate change. Drawing from Jonathan Levin's theory of ecocriticism, Adeoye (2014) proposed "eco-theatricalism" a distinctly Nigerian model that merges mythopoetic traditions, performative adaptation, and total theatre idioms to confront environmental degradation. The works of playwrights such as Ahmed Yerima's *Mojagbe*, Greg Mbajiorgu's *Wake Up Everyone*, and Benedict Binebai's *My Life in the Burning Creeks* dramatized issues like oil pollution and flood disasters; eco-theatre was presented as both an artistic and ethical response to environmental injustice (Liman, 2024 and Abakporo & Ohenhen, 2023). Theatrical forms that draw from African cosmologies and performance styles, such as chant, ritual, masquerade, and dance, not only engage audiences but also reconnect them to traditional environmental ethics that emphasise balance and respect for the earth.

What emerges from both perspectives is a call to view Nigerian theatre not merely as a space for entertainment but as an ecological tool, one that can educate, provoke, and inspire new models of coexistence with nature. In the face of Nigeria's worsening environmental conditions, eco-theatre offers a culturally resonant path for shaping sustainable futures. It taps into the emotional and communal dimensions of performance to address what policies and scientific reports often fail to communicate effectively.

In Nigeria, there is lack of laws (or even where the law exists) and enforcement of ecological and environmental regulation to protect wildlife. Even known wildlife reserves are not adequately protected by law, as Ebeku (2004) noted weaknesses in the general legal framework for the protection of biodiversity. This contrasts sharply with what obtains in developed countries, inspired by the involvement of the United Nations in environmental issues following the Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 (Alvazzi del Frate & Norberry, 1993). At that conference known as the "Earth Summit" four documents were signed including Agenda 21 which stipulates what to do about environmental

protection (Etale & Otuya, 2019). Regulations in the United States require the possession of a license to hunt or fish. There is a limit to the size and age of wild animal to hunt down or fish to catch; and a limit to the number caught or hunted down in a hunting or fishing season as provided for by the law.

Nigeria is blessed with a diversity of animals and plants. Some have been lost forever; the Cheetahs, Gorillas, Rhinos and many animals are functionally extinct from Nigeria (Adedoye, 2025). Wildlife reserve is also a victim of illegal wildlife trade (IWT) which is considered among the most lucrative illegal industries in the world, and an overexploitation of natural resources, that is known to be a major driver of biodiversity decline, Overexploitation directly leads to loss of genetic diversity, population decline and extinction of species (Mozer & Prost, 2023).

There is need for concerned stakeholders to work together to ensure that the decline in biodiversity is halted. This can only happen when the legal framework for ecological and environmental protection is strengthened, increased awareness is created about the importance of biodiversity; working together to move from apathy to empathy for nature and wildlife (Adedoye, 2025). There is a ray of hope in Nigeria as the Endangered Species Conservation and Protection Bill, 2024 passed its final and third reading in the House of Representatives according to a June 2, 2025 press release (Wild Africa, 2025).

Despite the severity of Nigeria's environmental crises, the potential of theatre to address these issues remains largely underexplored. Existing performance traditions tend to privilege cultural heritage and social critique, often side-lining ecological themes. While global eco-theatre has gained academic traction, its application in Nigerian contexts, especially through indigenous forms and local narratives, has yet to be fully realised or examined. The lack of critical engagement with environmental ethics in Nigerian drama limits the scope of theatre's role as a medium for environmental sustainability, moral reckoning, and community empowerment. This study focuses on *Obeseri: Rumble in the Wild* by Rudolph Kansese as an eco-theatrical case study. While originally a prose work by Helen Opigo, the stage adaptation serves as a rich text for analysing environmental themes embedded in folkloric structures. The analysis draws on both global and local theoretical frameworks to examine how the play reflects environmental trauma, species loss, and ecological grief. The study is limited to textual analysis but informed by broader conversations in Nigerian eco-theatre scholarship and performance practice.

The study employs a qualitative, interpretive textual analysis, using theoretical frameworks developed by Una Chaudhuri specifically geo-pathology and species thinking to examine the environmental and ethical implications of the play (Chaudhuri, 2000; 2017). It reads the landscape and non-human characters as ethical subjects, not metaphors, and assesses the dramaturgical choices that foreground ecological harm. Supporting evidence is drawn from Nigerian theatre scholarship and eco-critical literature, alongside close readings of the play's structure, imagery, and characterisation. This article, therefore, positions Rudolph Kansese's *Obeseri: Rumble in the Wild* within this eco-theatrical tradition. By examining how the play engages with environmental ethics, ecological grief, and cultural resilience, the study reimagines performance as a site for environmental reflection and transformation. In doing so,

it builds on the critical insights of Aghamelu (2022) and Adeoye (2014) to argue that eco-theatre is not only relevant but necessary in confronting Nigeria's environmental crisis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarly interest in eco-theatre has expanded significantly in recent years, reflecting a broader academic concern with ecological consciousness in theatre and performance studies. Leading voices such as Una Chaudhuri, Theresa May, Baz Kershaw, Carl Lavery, and Lisa Woynarski have contributed theoretical frameworks that integrate environmental ethics into dramaturgy and performance practice (Woynarski, 2020).

According to May (2020), eco-theatre refers not just to plays about nature, but to performances that embed ecological issues in their structure, aesthetics, and production process. She describes it as storytelling that “acknowledges the interdependence of human and non-human life” (May, 2020, p. xii). Similarly, Una Chaudhuri's work on eco-drama shifts the focus from human-centred storytelling to one that centres the ecosystem and the dramatic agency of place, species, and landscape (Shafer, 2015, p. 35). She introduces the concepts of geo-pathology and species thinking, where landscapes act as carriers of ecological memory, and animals are seen as ethically present beings. Kershaw (2009) reinforced this by arguing that eco-theatre should not simply represent nature but should disrupt and reconfigure environmental relationships through performance itself (p. 21). Lavery (2016) added that eco-theatre must centre the “more-than-human” world, asking not how nature serves the play, but how the play serves ecological awareness (p. 145).

African scholars have built on these global conversations with contextual insights. Adeyemi (2018) opined that Nigerian eco-drama is rooted in indigenous environmental knowledge, blending activism with ritual and myth to dramatize the socio-political consequences of environmental neglect (p. 88). Adeoye (2014) also observed that eco-theatre in Nigeria exposes environmental problems and dramatizes the search for solutions through culturally relevant motifs (p.86). Nigerian performance traditions inherently contain ecological consciousness especially through folklore which can be revitalized to foster sustainability and reconnect with environmental ethics (Devi, 2024 & Ojede-Adejumo, 2023).

In this study, eco-theatre is understood not merely as performance about the environment, but as a dramaturgical and ethical framework through which plays like *Obeseri: Rumble in the Wild* can be interpreted for their symbolic engagement with ecological trauma, non-human agency, and ecological grief. Chaudhuri (2017) urged us to see the environment as a co-performer, capable of suffering and resistance, not just a backdrop. May (2020) further emphasized that ecological reciprocity and community-centred values should inform both theatre-making and its thematic content (p. 4, 124). In this spirit, Eckersall, Monaghan, and Beddie (2014) proposed viewing theatre as an ecological system of human and non-human interrelations (p. 20), while Ihidero (2022) linked eco-theatre to ritual, embodiment, and the lived complexities of environmental injustice (p. 83). Woynarski (2020) moved this argument further by criticizing reductive problem-solution narratives in climate performance. Instead, she advocates for affective, sensory, and relational ecodramaturgies that decentre the human and challenge neoliberal environmental logic (p. 10). Claessen (2021) expanded this vision

through visual and costume design, suggesting that performance should dissolve species boundaries and offer posthuman aesthetics, what she calls “posthuman skin” that blurs the lines between the hunter and the hunted (pp. 16–21). These global and African theoretical frames align with findings from recent Nigerian scholarship.

Liman (2024) emphasizes the ethical responsibility of directors to adopt sustainable production practices and challenge audiences to rethink their relationship with nature (p. 5). Okoro and Otonko (2024) extended this argument through the lens of children’s theatre, asserting that eco-drama “cultivates empathy” and equips young audiences to become moral agents of change (p. 241). Afolabi and Llewellyn (2022) also highlighted ethical theatre-making as grounded in positionality, mutual respect, and a rejection of artistic ego in favour of shared meaning and social justice (p. 18).

The ethical dimension of eco-theatre is further explored in Nigerian Theatre Journal contributions that focus on participatory and community-based performance. Idebe (2024) framed Theatre-for-Development (TfD) as a tool of ethical empowerment, rooted in lived experience and aimed at provoking lasting behavioural change (p. 47). Okorie (2024) also used socio-drama to critique the use of divine fatalism as an excuse for ecological inaction, calling instead for responsible environmental citizenship (p. 6). Okeke (2024) showed how agricultural festivals adapt to climate realities and reflect ecological consciousness in their timing and ritual form (p. 98), while Longgul (2024) argued that cinema, and by extension theatre, must actively indict systems that perpetuate environmental injustice (p. 72).

Traditional storytelling also serves as a wellspring of environmental ethics. Salifu, Onogu, and Egwemi (2024) argued that Igala folktales embody conservation principles, which theatre can represent and amplify (p. 96). Their call for intentional staging of such tales reflects the view that theatre can recover ethical codes obscured by modernity. Meanwhile, Iroh and Aghamelu (2024) proposed that ethical development communication, akin to participatory theatre, can foster climate literacy and empower rural communities through culturally resonant storytelling (p. 106).

Correa and Gerner (2025) put together international contributors from artists, philosophers, scientists and interdisciplinary scholars who examined ways climate theatre, eco-dramaturgy and performance can inform ecological consciousness, eliciting both individual empathy and collective action within the context of the Anthropocene, Capitalocene and Plasticocene. Theatre, film and performance events are imagined as ethical-aesthetic means of diffusing ecological and political insights in multiple artistic forms and expressions; revealing the live dynamics and controversies of contemporary climate theatre and eco-dramaturgy. Taken together, these perspectives demonstrate that eco-theatre in both global and the Nigerian contexts is not just about creating awareness but about enacting responsibility. It is a space of shared ethical reflection, where theatre-makers, audiences, and communities are called not only to observe environmental crisis but to respond, resist, and reimagine.

Theoretical Framework: Geo-pathology and Species Thinking as Ethical Lenses

This study applied two interrelated concepts drawn from Una Chaudhuri's ecological criticism, geo-pathology and species thinking, as its theoretical framework. These concepts move the analysis of eco-theatre beyond representational concerns and ecological themes into the terrain of moral engagement. That is, they position theatre not only as a reflection of environmental degradation but as an ethical site for confronting species loss, non-human agency, and ecological grief.

Geo-pathology, introduced by Chaudhuri (2000), redefined theatrical landscapes as more than scenic backgrounds; they are seen as sentient terrains bearing the emotional and historical weight of environmental trauma. In this view, nature becomes a character capable of memory, response, and resistance. As Chaudhuri (2000) observed, plays such as Caryl Churchill's *Far Away* present ecologies that are "violently divided within themselves as well as against a violently divided humanity" (p.506), reinforcing the idea that landscapes in crisis reflect ethical breakdowns in human-nature relations. This disruption of ecological coherence and emotional response from the environment captures the essence of geo-pathology.

In *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild*, this concept is echoed in the portrayal of the forest as a trembling, weeping, and reactive entity a geopathic landscape that serves not just as a backdrop but as a wounded witness to human aggression. As one reviewer of the play noted, "the forest in *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* emerged not as a static backdrop, but as an emotionally reactive character trembling, shaking, and weeping in response to human violence."

Moreover, Chaudhuri and Enelow (2006) reflected on set design and space in their performance experiments, asking whether the stage can move away from reflecting the antagonistic nature-culture divide and instead reflect moral presence: "Would nature be present in profuse and fertile detail, or present only as a terrifying absence and coldness?" (p. 11). In this way, geo-pathology becomes a means of questioning not just what nature looks like on stage, but how nature feels and what ethical questions that feeling demands.

Species Thinking: Ethical Recognition of the Non-Human

Species thinking offers a moral reorientation to how performance engages with animals and non-human life. Rather than viewing animals as metaphors or theatrical tools, Chaudhuri (2017) called for a politics of proximity that respects their autonomy while inviting imaginative empathy. The author argued that animal-focused theatre should "explore the politics of a new mixed relationship of proximity to yet autonomy from human beings" (p.517). These reframing challenges the anthropocentric logic embedded in traditional dramaturgy.

Baudrillard's *Influence*, cited by Chaudhuri (2000), sharpens this ethical point: "Animals are forced to perform us, to ceaselessly serenade us with our own fantasies" (p. 511). Theatre that only uses animals to symbolise human themes perpetuates their erasure. In contrast, species thinking calls for theatre that enacts what Derrida Jacques calls the "exchange of looks" a mutual ethical witnessing between species (Chaudhuri, 2007, p. 14).

Chaudhuri and Enelow (2006) pushed this further through performance studies, noting that their work aimed to develop "a stage adapted not to seeing the animal, but to seeing as an

animal" (p.11). This reorientation places the audience and performer into shared perceptual vulnerability, turning the theatre into a space of moral reassessment.

Rosenthal's *The Others*, analysed by Chaudhuri (2000), further destabilises the idea of "speaking for the animal" by choosing instead to "enact the emotional and ethical weight of interspecies violence" (pp. 514–515). Likewise, Claessen (2021) describes costume as "posthuman skin," an aesthetic and ethical act that dissolves species boundaries and asks what it means to share material and existential fate (p. 18).

This framework is well-aligned with African eco-theatre practices. Adeyemi (2018) noted that Nigerian eco-drama fuses indigenous ritual with activism, placing nature as an ethical agent within performance (p. 88). Ihidero (2022) echoed this view, arguing that rituals and mythopoesis in performance attend to ecological injustice and dramatize our responsibility to the more-than-human world (p. 83). Woynarski (2020) added that eco-theatre must not only raise awareness but also disrupt dominant representational forms by decentring the human and embracing embodied ecological ethics (p. 10). This is echoed in Liman (2024) discussion of Nigerian theatre, where eco-theatricality incorporates "eco-friendly production practices" and frames the director as a moral leader in shaping community perspectives (p. 5).

Chaudhuri's ultimate call is for a theatre that does not merely show the environment but feels with it a theatre that embraces "animal rights" as "a new form of ritual performance that would engage with, diagnose, and heal the historically complex relationship between humans and other animals" (Chaudhuri, 2000, p. 510). In this way, both geopathology and species thinking offer a robust ethical framework for reading *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* not simply as a folkloric narrative of bravery, but as an eco-theatrical confrontation with grief, silence, and species loss.

***Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* in Context: Folklore, Heroism, and Environmental Loss**

Obeseri: Rumble in the Wild draws from folkloric traditions to craft a narrative of masculine heroism and communal reverence. The character of Obeseri is introduced as a beloved figure in the kingdom of Kuro, a man whose fishing and hunting prowess earns him admiration from commoners, women, and even royalty. His name is sung in praise, his feats celebrated in ritual, and his return from the wild met with dance and decoration. Yet beneath the cultural pride and heroic spectacle lies a profound moral contradiction: Obeseri's fame is built on ecological devastation.

In classic folkloric structure, the hero embodies ideals that communities admire courage, strength, productivity. Obeseri exemplifies these qualities, capturing "sharks, dolphins, barracudas, salmons," and killing "tigers, lions, elephants, zebras, and kangaroos" (*Obeseri*, ll). However, the celebratory tone of these victories obscures the environmental grief they leave behind. The very traits that make Obeseri heroic to humans render him a terror to animals, who describe him as a "threat to our existence," "a security risk," and "a danger to our kingdom" (*Obeseri*, ll. 95–115).

What makes *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* particularly compelling as an eco-theatrical text is its double-layered narrative. On the surface, it reads as a cultural myth of triumph; underneath, it stages a geopathic lament. The forest does not merely shake during Obeseri's rampage it

mourns. “It was as if the entire forest ran with them. Trees were shifting like living things... There was trumping everywhere. Crying voices could be heard for miles” (*Obeseri*, ll. 215–220). This dramatization of landscape grief aligns with Una Chaudhuri’s concept of geopathology, which views landscapes as expressive beings carrying the trauma of human violence (Chaudhuri, 2000, p. 506). The forest is not passive. It reacts.

Similarly, the animal characters offer emotional testimonies of loss, fear, and mourning. The lioness, who has lost three of her four cubs to Obeseri, speaks not from symbolic distance but from maternal anguish: “Even that one cub is not safe as long as Obeseri lives” (*Obeseri*, l. 107). The jackass has lost his entire family. The kangaroo laments their extinction. These perspectives echo Chaudhuri’s theory of species thinking, which insists that animals on stage must be seen as “ethically present” rather than metaphorically appropriated (Chaudhuri, 2017, p. 517). The animals of *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* articulate their pain, deliberate resistance, and ultimately, resign themselves to the violence they cannot overcome.

The climax of the play underscores this moral contradiction. Obeseri slaughters countless animals in a single act of defence, and the community of Kuro greets his return not with grief or caution, but with adoration. “The king decorated Obeseri with several medals... Women danced for him and constantly surrounded him with admiration” (*Obeseri*, ll. 230–240). The celebratory finale erases the ethical costs of his actions. This unresolved tension between cultural heroism and environmental destruction mirrors what Kershaw (2009) called the “ecological irony” of performance that what is celebrated on stage may be ethically unsustainable offstage.

Thus, *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* functions as a complex eco-theatrical narrative. It affirms folkloric values while exposing their limits. It invites cultural pride while simultaneously making space for ecological mourning. Most importantly, it reveals the ethical blind spots embedded in traditional ideas of manhood and success offering not a resolution, but a reflection on the price of unchecked triumph.

The Forest as a Witness: Environmental Trauma on Stage

In *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild*, the forest does not function as a neutral setting; it emerges as a conscious presence that responds emotionally to violence. When Obeseri storms the wild, the stage directions evoke a sense of collective dread: “The trees were shifting like living things... Crying voices could be heard for miles” (*Obeseri*, ll. 215–220). This dramatization reflects what Una Chaudhuri calls geopathology the idea that landscapes hold memory and moral weight, bearing the imprint of human violence (Chaudhuri, 2000). The trembling of the forest is not just theatrical embellishment; it is a gesture of mourning, a signal that nature itself is a witness to destruction. The weeping forest in *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* transforms the performance space into a site of ecological grief, staging trauma not through spoken lines but through affective movement, silence, and disruptions in the physical environment.

The play thus invites its audience to engage emotionally with place, not merely as a backdrop but as a character enduring loss. The collapsing forest, shifting trees, and echoing cries perform the wounds of a world exploited for glory. It asks: who applauds when the earth bleeds? What does it mean to cheer for a hero who leaves behind a landscape of ghosts?

Animal Voices and Ethical Fractures: Challenging Human Supremacy

While Obeseri is hailed as a warrior in human society, he is remembered as a destroyer in the animal world. Through dialogue and testimony, the animals become more than symbolic props; they voice fear, grief, and critique. The lioness mourns her slain cubs. The jackass recalls the extinction of his family. The kangaroo laments the annihilation of his kind. These scenes reflect Chaudhuri's concept of species thinking a framework that challenges anthropocentric storytelling and demands recognition of animal subjectivity (Chaudhuri, 2017). By allowing the animals to speak, *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* destabilizes the hierarchy of species. It offers a vocal plurality on stage where the dominant narrative of human heroism is contested by the quiet truths of ecological suffering. These animals do not ask for pity; they claim presence. As Chaudhuri and Enelow (2006) argued, ethical performance "adapts not to seeing the animal, but to seeing as an animal" (p. 11). *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* does just that: it stages animals not as metaphors but as ethical beings, inviting the audience to listen across species lines. This fracture in narrative authority challenges the audience's view. Are we to celebrate Obeseri, or to mourn with those he has displaced? The ethical ambiguity here is intentional. It forces the audience to reckon with the moral costs of anthropocentric triumphs and to question who gets to tell the story of survival.

Glory and Collapse: The Irony of Heroism

The dramatic irony at the heart of *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* lies in the gap between cultural praise and ecological reality. Obeseri returns to Kuro greeted by cheers, decorated by kings, and adored by women. Yet his path to glory is strewn with bodies and broken habitats. This duality mirrors what Kershaw (2009) calls "ecological irony" a form of performance that appears celebratory but is undercut by environmental cost.

Obeseri's heroism is not a lie; it is a partial truth. He is indeed brave, skilled, and beloved. But his story is incomplete without the counter-narrative of loss, one told by forests that shake and animals that mourn. The play does not resolve this contradiction. Instead, it stages it. And in doing so, it offers a critique of traditional heroism that ignores its ecological shadow.

By embedding this irony into its structure, *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* becomes more than folklore. It becomes eco-theatre. It affirms cultural pride while exposing its limits. It lifts a hero while letting the earth fall silent. And it asks us, as spectators, to reconsider what kind of victories we applaud, and at what cost.

Reimagining Performance for a Sustainable Future

The following recommendations aim to translate the critical insights of this study into actionable strategies for Nigerian theatre practitioners. They are grounded not just in the ecological themes presented in *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild*, but in the ethical and performative possibilities that eco-theatre opens up. These proposals call for urgency, vision, and a deeper rethinking of theatre's role in an environmentally ethical and sustainable future.

Reimagine Heroism Through Ecological Ethics

Rather than centring narratives solely on human conquest or dominance, playwrights should craft protagonists whose heroism lies in ecological responsibility those who protect, restore, or grieve with the natural world. As *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* demonstrated, unexamined glory

often masks harm. Future narratives should ask: Who benefits from this triumph? Who or what is silenced by it?

Dramaturgical shift: Introduce human characters who witness or absorb the forest's grief, not just animals. This redistributes emotional and ethical weight across the cast and disrupts anthropocentric patterns. As Tanja Beer and Dominique Hes aptly noted, "Contemporary ecological concerns bring with them an opportunity for innovation; to rethink traditional practices and forge new approaches that not only strive for sustainability, but also push intellectual and creative boundaries" (Beer & Hes, 2017, p. 33).

Ecologically Conscious Set and Prop Design

Set designers can reflect ecological themes by using materials and stagecraft that embody environmental ethics. Rather than elaborate synthetic scenery, productions might embrace reclaimed wood, organic fabrics, or biodegradable elements. Symbolic resonance: Let the set visibly decay or transform throughout the performance, mirroring environmental change and decay. This invites the audience to feel the fragility of the world onstage. As Damond Morris observed, "The theatrical industry is broken, plundering the earth of valuable resources without a thought for the wellbeing of future generations" (Morris, 2007, p. 34). This calls for urgent and visible reform in how theatre material culture is imagined and implemented. This vision aligns with Pamela Howard's reminder: "Performance makers... have a responsibility in these times to address the problems of today and to fuel change and alternatives to show that rich and beautiful theatre can be made without creating mountains of waste" (Howard, 2009, p. 34).

Costumes That Reflect Species Entanglement

In *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild*, the animal characters express emotional complexity, but their costumes often fail to reflect that depth. Costume design can be reimaged to suggest interspecies fragility and blurred boundaries (Fanyam, (2024). Design idea: Use torn fabrics, layered textures, and weathered materials to visually represent ecological trauma. Costumes can carry grief as visibly as words do, let animals wear their loss. As Beer and Hes (2017) noted designers must be willing to embrace improvisation and openness: "If a designer is willing to improvise a little... we open up to more possibilities in the rehearsal process... and more openness for ecological solutions" (p. 50).

Develop Eco-Dramaturgy Grounded in Local Ecologies

Rather than adopting generic "green" narratives from global discourse, Nigerian theatre should draw from local ecological practices and indigenous knowledge. Nigerian traditions are rich with performances that honour forests, rivers, animals, and cosmology. As Mason and Turner (2020) noted, "Cultural sustainability underscores the need to maintain and develop cultural practices that contribute to the vitality and resilience of societies." In this context, theatre becomes more than cultural expression, it becomes a method for sustaining ecological wisdom rooted in community and performance. Similarly, Aol (2024) affirmed that, "Performing arts serve as a living repository of cultural heritage ensuring their preservation." This reinforces the idea that eco-dramaturgy is not only environmentally relevant but also vital for the continuity of indigenous storytelling and ritual-based ethics.

Practice idea: Embed land-based rituals, seasonal cycles, and community ethics into dramaturgy, not as nostalgic decoration, but as structural logic that grounds the story.

Include the Environment as a Reflective Character

As shown in *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild*, the forest is not passive. It trembles, weeps, and collapses. Directors should treat environmental elements as active agents with narrative arcs and emotional registers. Staging technique: Use lighting, sound, and choreographed movement to give presence to trees, sky, or water. Let the environment react, change, and grieve even in silence. Sustainability should be woven into the creative fabric, not treated as a side note: Beer and Hes (2017) noted that "Working sustainably celebrates innovation and challenges designers to think about what is at hand as well as what is possible" (p. 37).

Shift from Aesthetics to Ethical Imagination

These recommendations go beyond "greening" theatre. They call for a philosophical shift that sees ecological ethics as central to storytelling. Theatre becomes not just a mirror but a mode of resistance in a space where grief is shared, where silences are honoured, and where new ways of living might be imagined. *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* does not offer easy answers. It stages discomfort. It exposes contradictions. It invites mourning. Nigerian theatre, by embracing this discomfort, can become a site of ecological reimagining where heroism is redefined, the non-human is dignified, and performance becomes part of the work of healing and survival. As Justin A. Miller noted, "Every production is an opportunity to be more environmentally conscious... to resist the way-it's-always-been-done in favour of innovation" (Miller, 2012, p. 37). And Alison Tickell added, "Creativity is the most sustainable and renewable energy source on the planet. Let's use it" (Tickell, 2012, p. 38). Ultimately, the question is not just how theatre can be greener, but how it can reimagine the future. As Beer and Hes (2017) provocatively asked, "How do we create a sense of opulence without being opulent?" (p. 41). The answer lies in moral clarity, design imagination, and ecological empathy.

CONCLUSION

Obeseri: Rumble in the wild demonstrates how theatre can move beyond symbolic environmental references to a deeper ethical engagement with the natural world. Through its portrayal of a forest that weeps and animals that mourn, the play highlighted the emotional and ecological costs of unchecked human triumph. It does not offer solutions but rather holds space for grief, contradiction, and moral reflection. In doing so, it embodied what eco-theatre aspires to: not just a critique of environmental degradation, but a call to reimagine how humans coexist with the more-than-human world. The study's findings show that Nigerian theatre already possesses rich tools, ritual, masquerade, indigenous storytelling, and performative symbolism that can be redirected toward environmental ethics and sustainability. *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* reimagined heroism as ecologically problematic, shifting audience perception from admiration to accountability. It demonstrated that theatre, when ethically framed, can reveal the human cost of ecological harm and invite collective mourning and reflection. This study has shown that Nigerian theatre possesses rich tools for advancing environmental responsibility through indigenous knowledge, participatory models, symbolic performance, and dramaturgical innovation. When designers, directors, and playwrights reframe aesthetics to centre ecological ethics, they transform the stage into a site of mourning, critique, and potential

healing. Theatre then becomes a space where silences speak, where nature is not scenery but a subject, and where audiences are invited not just to witness environmental loss, but to carry the weight of its meaning. In this way, theatre becomes both a mirror and a mediator, a place where cultural pride is challenged by ecological truth, and where the future is not simply imagined, but ethically rehearsed. In conclusion, theatre would become not merely a mirror of crisis but a mediator of ethical consciousness. It holds the power to reframe how communities relate to nature through grief, storytelling, resistance, and imagination. In this way, *Obeseri: Rumble in the wild* shows us that the stage is not only a place to perform culture, but also a space to rehearse survival and environmental justice.

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