

# Environmental Injustice in African American Ecopoetry in the Twentieth Century: An Ecocritical Study of Selected Poems

Muhammad Agami Hassan Muhammad

The Dept. of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Translation, Al-Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, KSA

**Abstract**—This article examines five poems of different African American poets from 1900 to 1999. Its main objective is to explore how each poet tackles African Americans' – and sometimes other minorities' – marginalization and persecution in the US, highlighting the eco-injustice practices conducted by the white authority. It also traces the established bond between African Americans and nature in the twentieth century through an ecocritical analysis of the selected poems. The article includes an examination of the reaction of African American schools developing from racial romanticism to resistance. To achieve this, the article identifies the differences between two basic terms that are usually used interchangeably: ecojustice and environmental justice. Then it identifies and illustrates four types of ecopoetry: nature poetry, environmental poetry, ecological poetry, reclamation ecopoetics/ecojustice poetry.

**Index Terms**—ecojustice, environmental injustice, ecopoetry, Harlem Renaissance, The Black Aesthetics

## I. INTRODUCTION

With a growing sense of the dangers that represent a real threat to the environment of our planet, environmentalists call for immediate actions to stop violation of nature. In dealing with topics related to such threats, terms such as environmental justice and ecojustice have been used synonymously to mean violation of man against nature, though both terms are slightly different. According to Encyclopedia.com, ecojustice refers to at least two meanings. "The first refers to a general set of attitudes about justice and the environment at the center of which is dissatisfaction with traditional theories of justice." This definition entails that "the value of non-human life-forms is independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes." The other usage refers 'to the linking of environmental concerns with various social justice issues. This implies "concern with the frequent location of polluting industries and hazardous waste dumps near the economically disadvantaged." It also "involves the fostering of sustainable development in less-developed areas of the globe" and stopping the export of such pollutants to these areas.

This second definition of ecojustice is synonymous to the definition of environmental justice in Encyclopedia Britannica where the term refers to a "social movement seeking to address the inequitable distribution of environmental hazards among the poor and minorities" (Arney, 2021). Thus, environmental justice has an anthropocentric dimension which seeks equity and justice to all people regardless of race, color or any other discriminatory criteria.

Sorrowfully, examples of environmental injustice are found in all the corners of the globe and not confined to less developed countries. For example, the United States is one of the developed countries that have a long history of eco-injustice on the environmental and anthropological levels. A lot of studies warn against the abuse of natural resources and discriminating against minorities. In "Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality," sociologist Robert D. Bullard emphasizes the huge discrepancy concerning levels of pollution and environmental stressors between the rich and working class, and between the whites and the colored minorities (Bullard, 2000, p. 1). Ironically, the author reveals that "[d]espite Legislation, court orders, and federal mandates, institutional racism and discrimination continue to influence the quality of life in many of the nation's black communities" (p. 6). He attributes this bitter irony to different factors. "Federal policies, for example, played a key role in the development of spatially differentiated metropolitan areas where blacks and other visible minorities are segregated from whites, and the poor from the more affluent citizens" (p. 6).

Charles Lee in "Toxic Pollution and Race," published in *Ecojustice: The Unfinished Journey*, enumerates some aspects of environmental injustice African Americans and colored groups are subjected to in the US. For instance, "the nation's largest hazardous waste landfill, receiving wastes from forty-five states, is located in predominantly black and poor Sumter County, Alabama." Another example is found in south Chicago, predominantly inhabited by black and Hispanic ethnicities. It "has perhaps the greatest concentration of hazardous waste sites in the nation." In west Dallas, black children "suffered irreversible brain damage from exposure to lead pollutants from a nearby lead smelter, won a \$20 million out-of-court settlement" (Lee, 2004, pp. 93-4).

Lee also refers to an important report conducted by The United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice. The report is entitled, "Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socio-Economic

Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites." In this report, the commission documents the disproportionate distribution of hazardous waste in the US and draws to some conclusions of which are the following:

- (1) Race consistently proved to be the most significant among factors tested in association with the location of commercial hazardous waste facilities.
- (2) Communities with the highest number of commercial hazardous waste facilities had the greatest composition of racial and ethnic residents.
- (3) More than fifteen million blacks and eight million Hispanics lived in communities with one or more uncontrolled toxic waste sites.
- (4) Forty percent of the nation's total commercial hazardous waste landfill capacity was located in three predominantly black and Hispanic communities. (1987, p. 96)

As a result of this environmental awareness, a surge in studies in all fields rapidly increases. Ecopoetry and ecocritical studies have flourished in the recent decades as a means to highlight such dangers and their catastrophic consequences on man and nature. Ecocritics often use different terms to describe poetry that tackles environmental issues; e. g. nature poetry, environmental poetry and ecological poetry...etc. In *The Ecopoetry Anthology*, Ann Fischer-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street classify ecopoetry into these three terms identifying the differences between them.

In terms of poetry written since the rise of environmentalism in the 1960s, we have come to envision contemporary American ecopoetry as falling loosely into three main groupings. The first is nature poetry. In Wendell Berry's words, this is poetry that 'considers nature as subject matter and inspiration. (Fischer & Street, 2013, p. xxviii)

Fischer and Street identify that environmental poetry is

propelled by and directly engaged with active and politicized environmentalism. It is greatly influenced by social and environmental justice movements and is committed to questions of human injustice, as well as to issues of damage and degradation to the other-than-human world. (p. xxix)

The editors consider the third category, ecological poetry, "elusive" for "it engages questions of form most directly, not only poetic form but also a form historically taken for granted—that of the singular, coherent self." They cite Forrest Gander's definition of the term as "it thematically and formally investigates 'the relationship between nature and culture, language and perception.'" Fischer and Street conclude that the three categories fall under the big umbrella of ecopoetry. Also, they argue that it is likely to have a poem that falls under more than one category (p. xxix).

Katherine R. Lynes, in "'A Responsibility to Something besides People': African American Reclamation Ecopoetics," extends this categorization to encompass a fourth category she calls reclamation ecopoetics which attends "to the history of dangers human groups bring to the black human subject, along with the dangers humans bring to nonhuman" (Lynes, 2015, p. 51). This same definition is synonymous to ecojustice poetry.

I use 'reclamation' as part of the term because of its sense of resetting the course and realigning our attention; I use 'ecopoetics' as part of the term because it signals to the reader the environmental concerns that are often more strongly present in ecopoetry (as usually, though loosely, defined) than in nature poetry. (p. 51)

In her *Environmental Justice Witnessing in the Modernist Poetry of Lola Ridge, Muriel Rukeyser, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Elizabeth Bishop*, Sarah Grieve studies these four women poets whose poetry bears witness to whites' segregation of African Americans and violation of natural environment. She terms this as environmental justice witnessing which she defines, "as accounts that testify to experiences of injustices that affect humans and the environments they inhabit" (Grieve, 2015, p. i). Like Kelly Oliver, the author employs the dual meaning of witness, "to observe as an eyewitness and to bear witness as someone testifying to something beyond observable recognition" (p. xii). She justifies her choice of the four poets for they "tether concerns of social consciousness to environmental concern" and "bear witness to traumas that affect human and non-human members" (p. xv).

Many scholars wrote about and/or edited anthologies about ecopoetry and its subsequent classifications. These anthologies exemplify how nature has always represented an inspiration to poets from classical poetry until now. Of these are anthologies which focus on African American ecopoetry in particular. For example, Camille Dungy edited *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry*, where she illustrates how African American poets have been concerned about nature. She was driven by her sense of responsibility to register the ignored effort of Afro-American poets.

African Americans, specifically, are fundamental to the natural fabric of this nation but have been noticeably absent from tables of contents. To bring more voices into the conversation about human interactions with the natural world, we must change the parameters of the conversation. (Dungy, 2009, p. xxi)

The editor uses a thematic categorization of the African American works rather than chronological order. She classifies the poems in ten cycles where she exhibits how both the natural and human world, whether aligning with or opposing each other appear in the selected poems of the anthology. "They document natural and human-provoked disasters and their effects on individuals and communities. They explore sources of connection to, but also alienation from, the land" (p. xxii). The author here adopts Elizabeth Dodd's supposition that,

African American writers have not embraced nature writing' in the same manner as the dominant culture because 'the literary attempt to deflect attention away from human beings . . . might not be appealing for writers who already feel politically, economically, and socially marginalized. (p. xxv)

Dungy argues that some poems in the anthology "suggest a distaste for or disconnection from wilderness spaces" (xxv). In order to justify the complex relationship between African American and the land, she refers to what she calls

"the collusion between nature and [black] man". This collusion is represented in "the manner in which the natural world has been used to destroy, damage, or subjugate African Americans." Therefore, "it is no wonder that many African Americans link their fears directly to the land that witnessed or abetted centuries of subjugation" (p. xxvi).

Another anthology casting light on "culturally diverse poetry" is *Ghost Fishing: An Eco-Justice Poetry Anthology* edited by Melissa Tuckey. Influenced by Camille Dungy's anthology, Tuckey is inspired to write about the marginalized ethnicities because she believes that they "live disproportionately in harms with regard to environmental crisis," and their voices "have been historically underrepresented among nature and eco-poetry collections" (Tuckey, 2018, p. 1). The editor suggests a definition of ecojustice that explains a connection between the land and people; that is, "Ecojustice is recognition that the fate of the land is connected to fate of people" (p. 2). Tuckey also saw "how poetry and other arts have served throughout as a form of resistance, as an act of resurgence, and as cultural memory..." (p. 2). Like Camille Dungy, she follows a thematic classification of the poems relevant to major environmental issues.

This article will attempt to benefit from Camille Dungy and Melissa Tuckey's work. Its major aim is to examine five poems by different African American poets from an ecocritical approach. It will trace the development of ecojustice poetry of African American writers from 1900 to 1999. All the selected poems of this article are found in Camille Dungy's anthology, specifically "Cycle Five: Forsaken of the Earth". According to the editor, this part is where the line between the harm humans do to one another and that delivered by environmental forces blurs. These poems implicate the natural world in a personal or collective history of trauma ... As Cycle Five progresses, aspirations dwindle, and articulated more and more frequently are expressions of frustration or exasperation, descriptions of the natural forces that got the poems' subjects to this place of discontent. (p. xxxi)

The selected poems are Paul Laurence Dunbar's 'The Haunted Oak', Anne Spencer's "White Things," Langston Hughes' "Lament for Dark Peoples," Nikki Giovanni's "For Saundra," and G. E. Patterson's "The Natural World" respectively. They illustrate the relationship between the human and natural worlds and the divergent attitudes of African American writers toward the recurrent violations against their fellow Afro-Americans and the environment in the twentieth century, and the consequences of such violations. The article will also demonstrate how African American poets are driven by their sense of injustice pertaining to the long history of the white Americans' racist practices on African Americans and the environment. Following Melissa Tuckey's footsteps, the article will also explore how African American ecopoetry reflects a form of resistance and cultural memory. Ecocriticism, and eco/environmental justice theory will be utilized to investigate the African American poets' works.

## II. AFRICAN AMERICAN ECOPOETRY

During the twentieth century, African American poetry has developed rapidly to cope with the shifts in life conditions and sociopolitical circumstances. Like other artistic forms, it has echoed African Americans ordeals and aspirations. Nature has had an important share in their poetry; a share that nature has acquired from the long historical relationship dating back to the enslavement of Africans who were imported to work in the white man's plantations in the new land. The poems are selected and chronologically ordered to mark the development of this relationship between the victimized African Americans and violated nature.

Dunbar's 'The Haunted Oak' was written in 1900 when Ku Klux Klan, the white racist group, lynched a black American under the false allegation of 'the old, old crime' of raping a white woman. The oak tree sympathizes with the 'guiltless man' in a motherly way.

I bent me down to hear his sigh;  
I shook with his gurgling moan,  
And I trembled sore when they rode away,  
And left him here alone. (Dungy, 2009, p. 159)

Rape was a common accusation against the African Americans and widely used to stigmatize the black ethnicity. The tree feels as victimized as the innocent man for she has lost the bough on which the victim has been lynched; it has become 'bare' unlike the other boughs as a result. At the same time, the tree feels as guilty as the lynching group for she unwillingly participates in the crime. Camille Dungy illustrates 'the grisly function America's trees have served' to victimize African Americans has been a recurrent theme of many poems including Dunbar's "The Haunted Oak".

Many of the poems in this collection point to the collusion between nature and man, the manner in which the natural world has been used to destroy, damage, or subjugate African Americans. Even those poets who write decades after and miles away from the locus of the events they describe reveal caution and heightened awareness. (p. xxvi)

In "Green and Is the New Black: A Grammar of Ecocritical Readings in African American Poetry and Environmental Justice Law," Shanon Prince suggests that the lynch mob could have been incited by racist advocates such as Rebecca Felton "who claimed that white women were in such danger of being raped that, if necessary, whites should lynch one thousand black men a week" (Prince, 2013, p. 200). Unfortunately, the jailers were heedless to the warnings of his friends.

Ho, keeper, do not stay!  
We are friends of him whom you hold within,  
And we fain would take him away

From those who ride fast on our heels  
With mind to do him wrong;

They have no care for his innocence,  
And the rope they bear is long. (Dungy, 2009, p. 160)

Hurriedly, the white mob lynched the "guiltless man" on a branch of the oak tree which becomes "bare" unlike the rest of the tree boughs. Sympathetically, the tree bends down to 'hear his sigh' and shows intense emotions of trepidation and helplessness.

Prince bases her ecocritical analysis of "The Haunted Oak" on two terms: sacrifice zones and redlining. The first refers to the disproportionate areas where the marginalized groups in the American society such as the African American as sacrifice zones; a term that environmental activists use to describe areas where "low-income and minority populations, living adjacent to heavy industry and military bases, are required to make disproportionate health and economic sacrifices that more affluent people can avoid." The other term which is a financial term describing "how banks neglect impoverished communities" (Prince, 2013, p. 200).

By so doing, Felton "was transforming black men into a sacrifice zone, into a type of people whose humanity could be forfeited." The same devaluation is applicable to the oak tree that was "anguished at having been used for a lynching." The 'oak [was] victimized by the discrimination suffered by its human neighbors' (p. 200). In this way, "minority communities are indeed invested in – they are desirable because they are seen as disposable, fitting sites for the 'heavy industry and military bases' that Lerner describes" (p. 201). The tree thus feels the pain of her lost bough and the guilt of the lynched man.

I feel the rope against my bark,

And the weight of him in my grain,  
feel in the throe of his final woe  
The touch of my own last pain.  
And never more shall leaves come forth  
On the bough that bears the ban;

I am burned with dread, I am dried and dead,  
From the curse of a guiltless man. (Dungy, 2009, pp. 160-1)

These paradoxical feelings of guilt and pain accentuate the inseparable bond between man the surrounding environment. Each violation of man against nature influences both man and nature. Also, nature helps one group, though involuntarily, in doing injustice to another group. This melodramatic ending reveals Dunbar's racial romanticism, signifying the poet's lament for the whites' persecution of African Americans rather than showing resistance to injustice. The oak tree asks the murdered man not to weep condoling him that "the time will come when these shall dread /The mem'ry of your face" (p. 160).

With the rise of Harlem Renaissance in 1920s, the African Americans' voice became louder. Decrying the whites' othering of African Americans and other minority groups, condemnation of institutional segregation, and showing up a distinctive black identity are recurrent themes in its literary works. Though obscure in comparison to other pioneers of the school, Anne Spencer adopts the movement agenda in resisting whites' domination in "White Things." Although the poem was published in 1923 in *The Crisis*, after the killing of white farmer, who was known for his cruelty to the blacks, at the hands of one of his Afro-American employees. In search for the murderer, a white mob lynched nine innocent blacks including the murderer's pregnant wife who

was hung by her feet. Gasoline was thrown on her clothing and it was set on fire. Her body was cut open and her infant fell to the ground with a little cry, to be crushed to death by the heel of one of the white men present. The mother's body was then riddled with bullets. (Greene, 1977)

The poet divides the poem into two stanzas with a gradual rise in tone reflecting the poet's infuriation. In the first, Spencer highlights how the blacks are in harmony with the natural world for being colorful, and how the whites must come from another world for being colorless.

Most things are colorful things—the sky, earth, and sea.  
Black men are most men; but the white are free!  
White things are rare things; so rare, so rare  
They stole from out a silvered world—somewhere. (Dungy, 2009, p. 155)

Spencer here espouses the radical view that the blacks are the first race, and the whites are just anomaly. Hence, the backs are "most men" perhaps because they are chained with responsibility towards humanity and the natural world whereas the whites are "free" of any responsibility. Spencer reinforces the inseparable bond between man and nature hence. Being "free" and alien in this world, the whites start violating nature and subjugating the man – here the African Americans and all people of color. "They strewed white feathers of cowardice" everywhere: "the golden stars", red hills, and "darkened pine" trees.

In the second stanza, Spencer's tone is heightened to cope with the whites' blatant violations against man and nature "to wield power and spread whiteness" as Greene puts it. "The lines suggest that the psychological sustenance for whites is in destroying blackness" (Greene, 1977).

They blanched with their wand of power;  
And turned the blood in a ruby rose  
To a poor white poppy-flower.  
They pyred a race of black, black men,  
And burned them to ashes white; ... (Dungy, 2009, p. 155)

Susan Gubar, in *Racechanges: White Skin, Black Face in American Culture*, attributes the whites' destructive tendency to destroy the colored world and usurp the lively black color of black men, thus turning them to their ghastly white color of death.

Unlike [Spencer's] most earlier speculations, ... She therefore attributes racism to white belatedness, the anxieties of whites about entering a world of green, gold, red, dark, and ruby rose colors, all of which are born and born alive, while whiteness is produced by and through death. At its most gruesome Spencer's poem implies that, though colors simply exist, whiteness must be manufactured out of sacrificed black bodies. If blacks turn white only in death, perhaps white men are dead men, ghoulish ghosts in a silvered world of Unbeing. (Gubar, 1997, p. 102)

In the last four lines, Spencer demonstrates her mounting anger against the brutal white man through depicting them as son of hell. The white man, "Promethean and satanic" as they are, "they defiantly swing/In the face of God" and swear by their mother hell "Man-maker, make white!" Spencer, thus, suggests that white man's greed for power and domination will not be satisfied unless God makes all creatures as ghostly species and/or lifeless "white things" like them. The poet underlines the strong connection between the human and natural world, therefore. She stresses that human practicing of "othering" on another group will entail a transgression on the environment as people often link the place to the brutal events it witnesses. Her angry tone reflects Harlem Renaissance spirit which promotes protest against racism and environmental injustice.

In "Lament for Dark peoples", published in 1924, Langston Hughes tackles the impact of white racism on nature and man likewise. He widens his scope to focus on the whites' subjugation of African and native Americans, and other minorities. In the first two stanzas, Hughes illustrates the systematic dislocation of indigenous and African American the white man has implemented.

I was a red man one time,  
But the white men came.  
I was a black man, too,  
But the white men came.

They drove me out of the forest.  
They took me away from the jungles.  
I lost my trees.  
I lost my silver moons. (Dungy, 2009, p. 154)

In *Black Poets of the United States, from Paul Laurence Dunbar to Langston Hughes*, Jean Wagner explains why Hughes mentions certain natural elements in the poem.

The African forest and its trees, the jungle with its silvery moons – these are the romantic symbols of freedom of which the while man has deprived the colored people, so that he may enclose them in the cage of his civilization, as the tamer pens up wild beasts in his circus cages: ... (Wagner, 1973, p. 396)

After the white man have appropriated the land and have enslaved and persecuted African and native Americans, they've caged them "with the many" people belonging to other minorities "in the circus of civilization".

Now they've caged me  
In the circus of civilization.  
Now I herd with the many—  
Caged in the circus of civilization. (Dungy, 2009, p. 154)

In *Enslavement and Emancipation*, Harold Bloom and Blake Hobby suggest that by the end of the poem, "the sense of being inescapably 'caged' is emphasized through the reiterative, circular phrasing that dominates the whole poem, but especially the final stanza" (Bloom & Hobby, 2010, p. 91).

The cage in the circus of civilization Hughes mentions likely refers to the forced assimilation policies the successive Federal governments have imposed on colored people. In 'Cultural Assimilation of Native Americans', Giulia Marchiò (2022) explains that

Americanization policies were based on the idea that when Indigenous peoples learned the customs and values of the United States, they would be able to merge tribal traditions with American culture and peacefully unite with the majority of society. After the end of the Indian Wars in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the federal government banned the practice of traditional religious ceremonies. It established Native American

boarding schools that children were required to attend. In these schools they were forced to speak English, study standard subjects, attend church and leave tribal traditions behind.

Under slavery and then institutional and racial segregation, the African Americans were subject to harsher versions of Americanization. The enslaved ancestors were forced to leave their countries and work as farmers. Even after the Abolition, the freed slaves and their children were forced to assimilate into the white American culture. Langston Hughes, like other Harlem Renaissance writers, criticizes these measures which consider African Americans real citizens when they agree on depriving themselves of their black identity and embracing their victimizers'. The poet speaks out about the miseries of all other subjugated minorities in the last two lines to attract a wider audience of the marginalized ethnic groups. Hence, the poem, though simple in language and structure, conveys multiple themes. For example, it tackles the theme of eco-injustice on the environmental and anthropological levels. It also explains how the whites practice further measures on colored people to make them adaptable to the white "circus of civilization".

The fourth selected poem is Nikki Giovanni's 'For Saundra' published in *Black Judgment* in 1968. In this era, 1960s and 1970s, most of the African American works can be described as ethnocentric. Adhering to one's ethnic affiliation was a means of protection and survival. The Black Arts Movement, also called Black Aesthetic, was the major trend in black literature and art at the time. As per *Encyclopedia Britannica*,

Black Arts movement, period of artistic and literary development among black Americans in the 1960s and early '70s. Based on the cultural politics of black nationalism, which were developed into a set of theories referred to as the Black Aesthetic, the movement sought to create a populist art form to promote the idea of black separatism. Many adherents viewed the artist as an activist responsible for the formation of racially separate publishing houses, theatre troupes, and study groups. The literature of the movement, generally written in black English vernacular and confrontational in tone, addressed such issues as interracial tension, sociopolitical awareness, and the relevance of African history and culture to blacks in the United States.

As a loyal writer to Black aesthetic, Giovanni dedicates her poetry of this era to the life problems of African Americans and 'For Saundra' is no exception. The poet, like others, was influenced by the political turmoil and riots spreading in the American society, especially after the assassination of two major African American activists: Malcom X in 1965 and Martin Luther King in the same year of publishing the poem in 1968. In the beginning of the poem, she refers to these events as a revolution that cripples her ability to write poetry.

i wanted to write  
a poem  
that rhymes  
but revolution doesn't lend  
itself to be-bopping (Dungy, 2009, p. 151)

In the next two stanzas the Giovanni depicts environmental injustice represented in ruining the green cover in her neighborhood and blocking the political horizon before African Americans.

i like trees  
so i thought  
i'll write a beautiful green tree poem  
peeked from my window  
to check the image  
noticed that the school yard was covered  
with asphalt  
no green – no trees grow  
in manhattan

then, well, i thought the sky  
i'll do a big blue sky poem  
but all the clouds have winged  
low since no-Dick was elected (p. 151)

In a report entitled, "Nature Gap: Confronting Racial and Economic Disparities in the Destruction and Protection of Nature in America," the authors reveal the environmental discrepancy between the districts of the rich and those of the poor and colored.

1. Communities of color are three times more likely than white communities to live in nature deprived places. Seventy-four percent of communities of color in the contiguous United States live in nature-deprived areas, compared with just 23 percent of white communities.
2. Seventy percent of low-income communities across the country live in nature-deprived areas. This figure is 20 percent higher than the figure for those with moderate or high incomes.
3. Nature destruction has had the largest impact on low-income communities of color. More than 76 percent of people who live in low-income communities of color live in nature-deprived places. (Rowland et al., 2020)

The report is conducted more than fifty years after the poem was published, so one can imagine the volume of environmental violations then. Such conditions justify the terrible feeling coming over the poet when she looks from the



take exclusive possession of the natural world. To achieve this, they take advantage of everything and let the minority groups and the environment clean up the mess.

By depicting this bond between the subjugated African Americans and nature, the poets likely suggest that both share the same destiny. For this reason, people of color were living in harmony with nature until the white man came. The poets implicitly, or subconsciously, suggest that the two victimized parties can enjoy peace if only they could deter the whites from subjugating the first and ravaging the other nature. Among the five poets, Nikki Giovanni is the only one who undertakes the initiative to do this, i.e., putting an end to African Americans' marginalization and stopping violations against nature. Instead of lamenting white man's injustice like Dunbar and Patterson or being satisfied with defaming their racism and environmental injustice like Spencer and Hughes, she incites African Americans and other minorities to clean their guns as this is the only language those in power can hear. Thereupon, it is obvious that none of the selected poems can be categorized as nature poetry. However, they all fall under the umbrella of environmental, ecological and ecojustice poetry for they highlight the dangerous practices of man on other human groups and nature. They also expose the devastating impact of the dominant culture on the minority sub-cultures.

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**Muhammad Agami Hassan Muhammad** is an Egyptian associate professor of poetry in the Department of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Translation, Al-Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, KSA.