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Oil, Women and the Earth: An Ecofeminist Exploration of Oppression in Kaine Agary's Yellow and Christie Watson's Tiny Sunbirds Fraway

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Abstract: This study employs an ecofeminist framework to explore the intricate connections between oil, women, and the environment in Kaine Agary's Yellow Yellow(2006) and Christie Watson's Tiny Sunbirds Faraway (2011) Through qualitative literary analysis, the study reveals how oil symbolises patriarchal authority, reinforcing systems of oppression that affect both women and the natural world within petrol-driven capitalist societies. The findings reveal a profound relationship between environmental degradation and the subjugation of women, indicating that the exploitation of natural resources is intricately linked to the suppression of female identities. Oil acts as a tool that confines women to traditional roles, eroding their individuality and agency, while petrol-capitalists are portrayed as significant barriers to sustainable practices that negatively impact women and future generations. The narratives highlight the female protagonists as resilient figures who strive for autonomy, dignity, and survival in landscapes damaged by oil extraction. The study critiques the degradation inherent in oil-dependent societies, demonstrating how petrol culture, capitalism, and patriarchy together perpetuate the systemic exploitation of both women and the environment. The study concludes by emphasising the urgent need to safeguard women's rights and environmental health, arguing that these protections are crucial for achieving ecological sustainability and ensuring humanity's survival. By illuminating the interconnectedness between gender oppression and environmental degradation, the study advocates for a more equitable and sustainable future that recognises the intrinsic value of both women and the earth.

Keywords: Oil, Nature, Woman, Oppression, Capitalist Patriarchy.

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Introduction

In the contemporary landscape of global discourse, the interplay between oil, women, and the environment has emerged as a focal point of scholarly inquiry, prompting critical discussions within the framework of ecofeminism. This discourse reveals the profound interconnectedness between the

exploitation of oil and the consequent oppression of women and nature in capitalist patriarchal societies. The narrative surrounding oil is not merely one of economic gain; it symbolises a broader system of domination that jeopardises both ecological integrity and rights of women. Within this context, literature serves as a powerful medium for articulating the complexities of these relationships, as illustrated in Kaine Agary's Yellow Yellow and Christie Watson's Tiny Sunbirds Faraway. Throughout history, oil has often been woven into the fabric of masculinity and power, reinforcing the patriarchal structures that dictate societal norms. Scholarly perspectives, such as those presented by Allan, highlight the dual nature of oil as both a vital resource and a source of profound socio-ecological consequences. This sentiment is echoed by Macdonald, (2012) whose examination of 'oil fiction'' reveals how ''narratives surrounding oil are inherently intertwined with themes of labour exploitation, ethnic strife, and ecological degradation.'' (p.10) The perception of oil as a blessing –fueling technological advancement and enhancing daily life, stands in stark contrast to the environmental and humanitarian crises it exacerbates, establishing oil as a double-edged sword wielded by feminist and ecological oppressors alike.

This study aims to unearth the nexus between oil, women, and the earth, scrutinizing how petrol-culture functions as an oppressive force. The capitalist exploitation of fossil fuels not only perpetuates environmental degradation but also confines women to predetermined societal roles, stripping them of their individual identities. Through the lens of ecofeminism, the study delves into how the patriarchal frameworks underpinning petrol capitalism serve as catalysts for the systemic exploitation of both women and the natural world. With male-dominated societies historically wielding power over both realms, this analysis proposes that the domination of women and environmental desolation are intricately intertwined. Furthermore, it is essential to recognise how contemporary consumer culture subtly masks the destructive repercussions of oil exploitation. This veiling effect contributes to a general lack of awareness about the broader implications of oil extraction and its dire consequences for both women and the environment. As noted by Das (2016), ''society often operates on the illusion that human development necessitates the subjugation of nature, an ideology that fuels the relentless pursuit of petroleum resources without regard to sustainable practices.'' (p.45). This ideology promotes the notion that economic growth and technological advancement can only be achieved at the expense of nature, leading to practices that prioritize short-term gains over long term sustainability. As result, the relentless pursuit of oil and fossil fuels continues, often disregarding the ecological repercussions and the necessity for environmentally responsible alternatives, thereby perpetuating a cycle of environmental degradation and resource depletion.

Literary representations of oil reveal the contradictions and tensions present within these socio-political dynamics. In the selected texts, oil becomes not just a commodity, but also an embodiment of the structural violence employed to enforce male dominance and environmental exploitation. The selected narratives depict societies enmeshed in corruption, where the patriarchal order thrives on the degradation of women and the environment. By investigating these narratives, the study seeks to highlight the resonance between the fervent extraction of oil and the parallel oppression of women in a petrol-driven capitalist landscape. The investigation will further explore significant scholarly contributions that articulate the relationship between oil and literature, identifying thematic concerns of ecological justice, environmental degradation, and the indelible links to gender-based oppression. As ecofeminism posits, the parallel between the erosion of nature and the subjugation of women is not incidental but a deliberate feature of a patriarchal framework that prioritise exploitation over sustainability.

Therefore, this study endeavours to elucidate the multifaceted connections between oil, women and nature, asserting that the exploitation of these entities highlights broader inequalities embedded in both societal and environmental narratives. By contextualising the experiences female characters within the selected texts, the study aims to address the stark realities women confront in a world governed by petrol capitalism, ultimately advocating for greater awareness of the necessity to protect both women and the environment to ensure a sustainable future.

Theoretical Framework: Socialist Ecofeminism

Socialist ecofeminism serves as an apt theoretical lens for examining the interconnected oppressions experienced by women and nature, particularly in the context of Kaine Agary's Yellow Yellow and Christie Watson's Tiny Sunbirds Faraway. Rooted in the insights of the ecofeminist scholarly Carolyn Merchant, particularly in her seminal work Radical Ecology (2005), this framework critiques how Enlightenment thinking has contributed to objectification of both women and the environment. Merchant argues that western philosophical traditions have alienated individuals from nature, cultivating exploitative relationships founded on domination and control. Within this broader ecofeminist context, socialist ecofeminism emerges as a critical perspective that highlights the material and socio-economic hierarchies underpinning the experiences of women and the natural world under capitalist systems. It illuminates the fundamental connection between the oppression of women and the degradation of nature, asserting that these struggles cannot be understood in isolation. As Vandana Shiva (1993) articulates,' 'the same forces that are destroying nature are also destroying women's lives and livelihoods'' (p.2). This assertion underscores the intertwined realities of ecological and gender-based exploitation, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the systemic forces at play. Socialist ecofeminist scholars reveal that the commodification of nature mirrors the commodification of women labour and bodies. Mellor (1997) emphasises this link by stating ''in a world governed by capitalist relations, the exploitation of women is intrinsic to the exploitation of nature'' (p.300). This connection is vital for analysing the narratives presented in Yellow Yellow and Tiny Sunbirds Faraway, as both texts depict the commodification of natural resources and the marginalisation of women within socio-economic frameworks that prioritises profit over well-being.

Moreover, leading thinkers in socialist ecofeminism, such as Salleh (1997) argues for the dismantling of hierarchical structures that perpetuate oppression. Salleh contends that ''the struggle for a sustainable future must involve an equal rights agenda that recognises the rights of both women and nature'' (p.15). This foundational idea resonates throughout Agary's and Watson's narratives, wherein the voices of women are intertwined with the health of the environment, affirming the necessity of advocating for gender and ecological justice. In addition, Agarwal (1992) highlights the critical role that women play as primary caregivers and users of natural resources, pointing out that' 'their marginalisation fundamentally undermines ecological sustainability.'' (p.130) This dynamic is particularly relevant in Yellow Yellow and Tiny Sunbirds Faraway where the characters lived experiences reflect how the disempowerment of women exacerbates environmental challenges, underscoring both personal and systemic struggles. By synthesising feminist theory with ecological awareness and socialist principles, socialist ecofeminism recognises the complexities of how capitalist systems exploit both women and nature. This perspective is particular suitable for analysing the selected texts, which explore the ramifications of petroleum culture as an oppressive force that intersects with the lives of women and the environment. Therefore, socialist ecofeminism provides a powerful framework for investigating the intricacies of gender based and ecological oppression within selected narratives. By elucidating the interconnections between oil, capitalism, patriarchy and environmental degradation, this approach fosters a deeper understanding of the shared struggles faced by women and nature, advocating for systemic change that promotes both gender equality and environmental justice. The narratives in these texts poignantly illustrate the persistent impact of capitalist and patriarchal systems on women's lives and the wider ecological landscape, making socialist ecofeminism an invaluable lens for this analysis**.**

Ecofeminism and Oil

The relationship between nature and the human species has long been inseparable, particularly when considering the unique connection of women to the environment. Ecofeminism emerges as a vital theoretical framework that explores this intertwined oppression, highlighting how both women and the natural world have historically been commodified and subjected to domination. As Mellor (1997) states ''ecofeminism is a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination of and oppression of women'' (p.1). This intersection of gender and

ecological degradation is particularly evident in the context of oil exploration, which presents significant implications for both women and the environment, especially in regions like the Niger Delta. The destructive practices associated with oil exploration illuminate the harsh realities that women face in their daily lives, paralleling the degradation of the natural landscape. Collard and Contrucci (1988) criticise the male-centric attitudes toward nature, noting, ‘‘men thoughtlessly take pride in the destruction of nature by hunting for pleasure or keeping wild animals in cages to entertain spectators and earn money’’ (p.2). This statement draws attention to a broader cultural mindset that priotises exploitation for profit, positioning women and nature as expendable resources.

Moreover, Collard and Contrucci argue that ‘‘where the human hand has not greedily tinkered, nature is at least best, magnificent and awesome’’ (p.2). This acknowledgement suggests that the unchecked greed of humanity, particularly manifested through the oil industry, leads not only to ecological destruction but also to the degradation of social structures, leaving women vulnerable and oppressed. In the context of the Niger Delta where the selected narratives are set, oil extraction serves as a catalyst for this dual oppression. The oil industry, rife with corruption and exploitation, not only devastates the local environment but simultaneously undermines the social fabric, affecting women’s roles, identities, and agency. Collard also posits that, ‘‘the identity and destiny of women and nature are merged’’ (p137). This assertion underlines the ideological links between feminism and ecological activism, demonstrating that the fight against the oppression of women is inherently linked to the fight against environmental degradation. In the selected narratives, the female characters grapple with the consequences of oil exploration: as their environment suffers, so too do their lives, aspirations, and well-being. Women in these narratives are often depicted not only as victims of environmental degradation but also as active agents seeking change; a reflection of ecofeminist ideals that advocate for the reclamation of agency in the face of patriarchal and capitalist exploitative structures.

In Agary’s Yellow Yellow, the narrative encapsulates the struggles of Blessing, a young woman amid the chaos wrought by oil exploration and exploitation. Her journey underscores intersectionality of gender and environmental issues, showcasing how the destruction of the land correlates to a loss of cultural and community identity. As the environment deteriorates, so does the hope and future of the women in these communities, forced into roles defined by the repercussions of oil extraction. Similarly, in Watson’s Tiny Sunbirds Faraway, the impact of oil exploration is seen not only in the physical destruction of the landscape but also in the psychological and emotional toll on women. The female characters navigate a world increasingly dominated by male power structures; linked directly to the oil economy, that diminish their autonomy and agency. The ecofeminist perspective here is critical; it reveals how it serves as a conduit for oppression, entrenching patriarchal norms that silence women and alienate them from their natural surroundings. Oil is more than just a commodity. It is a powerful tool of oppression that exacerbates existing gender inequalities and environmental issues. As ecofeminist theory *suggests, the exploration of natural resources such as oil, frequently occurs through a patriarchal lens that views both nature and women as mere commodities. Eke (2021) discusses this dynamic stating ‘‘the oil industry operates on systems of patriarchal capitalism, which views land and women as resources to be extracted and exploited for profit’’ (p45). This underscores how economic motives derive the continued subjugation of both women and the environment, creating a cycle that perpetuates their suffering.*

Therefore, the selected narratives provide fertile ground for exploring the relationships between ecofeminism, oil, and the intersectional experiences of women. Through the lens of both narratives, the ecological degradation tied to oil exploration emerges as a crucial backdrop against which the struggles of women are articulated. In doing so, they reveal the urgent need for an ecofeminist framework that recognises these interconnected oppressions and advocates for a holistic approach to justice, one that addresses both environmental sustainability and gender equality. The struggles of women portrayed in the selected narratives serves as a powerful reminder of the broader implications of oil exploitation, calling for a collective response that prioritises the rights and voices of both women and nature.

Materials and Methods

The study explores the intricate connections between oil, women and the environment, emphasising the phenomenon of ecological exploitation through the lens of ecofeminism. The study is designed to investigate how the selected texts –Agary's Yellow Yellow and Watson's Tiny Sunbird Faraway—reflect and critique the dynamics of petrol culture and its implications for women and nature. The primary theoretical framework guiding this study is socialist ecofeminism. Socialist ecofeminism synthesies feminist and ecological theories, positing that the oppression of women and the degradation of the environment share interconnected roots in capitalist and patriarchal structures. This framework allows for an examination of how both women and nature are commodified and exploited in contexts driven by oil culture. By employing this theory, the analysis emphasises the socio-economic and political dimensions of ecofeminism, revealing the ways in which ecological and gendered injustices intersect.

The study adopts a qualitative research approach, which is particularly well-suited for literary analysis. By utilising qualitative methods, the research aims to drive rich, and nuanced interpretations of the selected texts, uncovering themes related to oil exploitation, gender dynamics, and environmental concerns. Through close reading and critical analysis, the study highlights the symbolic and thematic representations of women and nature within the context of petrol culture. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of character experiences, narrative structures, and the socio-political implications of the texts. The core method of data collection involves a thorough literary analysis of the selected narratives. This includes close reading of relevant passage, character analysis, and thematic exploration to identify how the narratives portray the interconnectedness of oil, women, and the environment.

To enrich the analysis and provide a broader academic context, the study includes review of secondary literature. Scholarly articles that focus on ecofeminism, literary criticism, and African literature are consulted to incorporate diverse perspectives and findings related to the themes explored. Books and essays from established ecofeminist theorists and literary critics provide theoretical and analytical frameworks that support the study's insights. The internet also serve as a valuable resource, allowing for access to a wide range of articles, essays, and critiques that address the connections between oil, women and the environment.

By utilising these methods, the study provides a comprehensive examination of the interplay between oil culture, women, and nature in the selected literary works. It contextualises the findings within broader socio-political realities and contribute to the ongoing dialogue on ecofeminism in modern African literature.

Textual Analysis

Watson's Tiny Sunbirds Faraway underscores the intricate relationship among oil, women, and the natural world. The novel sheds light on the exploitation of both women and the environment by the petroleum industry and capitalist patriarchy, drawing connections between the battle for gender equality and the demand for ecological justice. Ecofeminism embraces feminist ideologies and initiatives that recognise significant parallels between the patriarchal oppression of women and the resultant environmental degradation. Buckingham (2015) supports this viewpoint by stating that ''the domination of women and the degradation of the environment are consequences of patriarchy and capitalism. Any strategy to addressing one must take into account its impact on the other..'' (p.149). In essence, the oppression and exploitation of marginalised groups, especially women and the natural environment, are deeply intertwined. Watson's Tiny Sunbirds Faraway illustrates this interconnectedness, delving into the lives of women who face male dominance while simultaneously grappling with ecological crises ignited by oil exploration.

The challenges confronted by the Niger Delta region due to oil exploration are poignantly depicted in the narrative through the experiences of female characters such as Blessing, her mother, and her grandmother. These women endure harrowing moments in their ravaged African village, illustrating deep connections between oppression of women and the degradation of nature under patriarchal capitalist

forces. The oil boom in the Niger Delta triggered widespread oil extraction, leading to significant environmental destruction. This region once admired for its breathtaking natural beauty, rich biodiversity, and stunning landscapes, along with vibrant urban hubs like Portharcourt and Warri, and peaceful rural communities, has suffered immensely. Many residents, particularly women, grapple with poverty, often surviving on less than one dollar a day. Despite their land being abundant in oil resources and generating immense wealth, the local population remains deprived of the benefits that should arise from such riches.

Watson's novel unfolds in Warri, focusing on Mama and her children. The story is narrated through the eyes of Mam's daughter, a young girl named Blessing, who illustrates the hardships faced by women in the environmentally degraded region of Warri. These women bear the weight of ecological issues while striving to support their families Both the female population and the natural environment are subject to oppression, control, and exploitation by oil capitalists, community leaders, and both local and foreign workers from Western oil firms. This intersection of oil, capitalism and patriarchy governs the conditions and treatment of both women and their surroundings, exploiting them for the benefit of their own interests.

Mama's desertion by her husband, Father, amid the polluted streets of Lagos triggers series of hardships for her. Compelled to move to the conflict-ridden city of Warri, Mama finds herself entangled in a continuous struggle, surrounded by sordid activities of oil corporations. Father embodies patriarchal power, and his choices play a significant role in the deterioration of Mama's life. Already grappling with depression, she is aware of the dangers of settling in Warri but feels trapped without alternative options. Father's abandonment in Lagos leaves her feeling like a barren landscape, marginalised and without any support. This situation underscores how men's actions can have devastating impacts on women's well-being and livelihoods. The community in Warri faces a myriad of challenges, including rampant crime, pollution, violence, extreme poverty, hunger, and the horrifying prevalence of sexual assault. Safety is a perpetual concern for Warri's residents, and unfortunately, it is the women who bear the brunt of the turmoil in this troubled area. Ezekiel in particular opposes the family's move to Warri, expressing:

Even if you didn't make up…Warri is not safe, and theses villages are even worse. Swamp villages. I googled Warri in the internet café. Oil bunkering, hostage taking, illness, guns and poverty. What about my asthma? They burn poisonous chemicals straight into the air. It is not a safe place to live (TSBFA: p.8)

The panic in Ezekiel's voice states the obvious. Because of the state of oil exploitation and exploration in the region, the increase in crime cannot be undermined or overemphasized. There is high rate of killings, hunger and poverty. The people of the region live with the threat of violence, rape and death. Ezekiel's lament embodies socialist ecofeminism by showcasing the harmful effects of oil extraction on both women and the environment. His observations of Warri's struggles –characterised by oil-related violence and illness—highlight how industrial exploitation damages the natural landscape and worsens socio-economic challenges for marginalized communities, particularly women. Ezekiel connects his personal health issues, such as asthma, to environmental pollution from burning chemicals, underscoring the link between human and environmental well-being. Of course, if there was another place to relocate to, Mama would have concurred with Ezekiel's option of not travelling to Warri. Watson (2011) states that:

The pipeline flames and fires had a negative impact on the health status of the people living in the region. They live with the effects of environmental devastation caused by the continuous gas flaring and frequent ecological accident, which have amounted to over one and a half million tons of spilled oil; starvation, asthma, chest infections, and death (p287). Mama, Blessing and Ezekiel had no other option but to move to Warri despite the danger it presented. During the journey to Warri, Blessing and Ezekiel bear witness one to the very many environmental injustices perpetuated by the oil companies and the military government. Blessing narrates thus:

As we neared Warri, the sky became even brighter. I saw a flame in the distance, a giant touch which made the sky angry. ''pipeline fires'', said Zafi. ''They are burning the gases from the oil''. He started

coughing again . . . Warri even smelled different from Lagos. I closed my eyes and sniffed. The air smelled like book unopened for a very long time (TSBFA: p.19)

As depicted in the novel, Warri is faced with severe environmental pollution due to continuous gas flaring. Warri is an unhealthy and polluted environment that is totally unsafe for all living things. These oil companies burn gases without applying safety measures for protecting human lives and the environment. The above highlights the destructive practices like 'pipeline fires'' that harm the environment and disproportionately affect marginalized groups, especially women. The imagery of the 'angry sky'' and 'flame in the distance'' conveys the violence linked to the oil industry, supporting the ecofeminist critique of capitalism as it connects resource exploitation to social injustices, including gender inequality.

According to Ogunkeyede (2023) ''residents of Warri metropolis and visitors passing through the city are at risk of health issues due to air pollutants'' (n. page). Sofiullami (2024) notes that ''with around 2 million people living within 4 kilometers of flare sites across the country, many are exposed to the black fumes emitted in communities near gas flares, *Residents frequently report respiratory problems, skin rashes and eye irritations, affecting over 67 percent of the population'' (n. page). Unarguably, there are grave implications for burning gases. The gas flares affect the atmosphere and pollutes the air which leads to air borne diseases and illnesses. The flaring of gas has the tendency of unleashing such diseases as cancer, asthma, bronchitis, blood disorder, etc. Subsequently, against the region's ecosystem, the people are forced to share their neighbourhood with such unfriendly phenomena as acid rain, global heat, deforestation and contaminated toxic water. Women suffer most in these circumstances as they are confronted with numerous ecological challenges as they strive to provide for their families. In the narrative, Ezekiel notes that ''the air is poisoning our women'' (TSBF: p.202). The presence of harmful pollutants in the air caused by industrial activities in Warri affects the women as they ''suffer ''miscarriages and their children deformed'' (TSBF: p.202). This suggests that the exposure to toxic substances is posing a serious risk to pregnancies leading to tragic outcomes.*

Furthermore, Grandma's comments towards the water confirms the obvious. Oil spillage on water condemns the streams, rivers, making it unsafe for drinking. It is indeed oil in water. While she shows Blessing around, she didn't forget to stress that the water is not pure for drinking. Rather the tap water was preferable. The narrator says:

As Grandma led me away from the sink of the toilet, a new smell reached my nose. I followed her, all the time wondering what the smell was. Then I heard water. The water of the Delta is the blood of Nigeria''. Grandma led me through twisted red trees and scratchy bushes until we came to the river bird, and I felt the ground underneath my slippers soften and cool, as though I suddenly had my own slippers back. But we must not drink this. Only in emergencies. The tap water is cleaner. But now this water is full of oil, so only for washing clothes and bodies. Not for drinking . . .the water was dark. It looked like thick mud. Swirly patterns coloured the top, I could not see the reflection of the strange twisted trees. I peered in, half closing my eyes, but there were no reflections. Not mine. Not even Grandma's. . the river smelled like Warri, of old books that have been left in the rains (TSBFA: pp.20-21)

Warri is depicted as a war-torn zone in the novel; this underscores the fact that it is extremely perilous and inhospitable place to reside. The dangerous conditions prevailing in the entire Delta region are vividly recognised by Ezekiel, as he remarks, ''it's dangerous. The whole Delta region. And if we don't get shot, the bacteria and parasites will surely kill us'' (TSBF: p.14). The Niger Delta region is described as a dead and dangerous area, transformed from a paradise to a hellish place due to oil exploration and exploitation. The lack of control over these human activities make the situation even more perilous. Mama, abandoned by her husband, experiences depression but must find a way to support her family. Unfortunately, this leads her to get stuck in the polluted environment of Warri, along with her children. Mama becomes the primary victim of the circumstances, trapped in a polluted city that further exacerbates her hardship.

Blessing's journey with her grandmother to assist in the delivery of Emete's baby exposed her to an environmental disaster that she would not soon forget. According to Blessing, the water was polluted, smelly and unsafe. This is one of the contributions of Western Oil Companies to the region. Blessing narrates thus:

As we travelled across the water the smell of oil from the river made me cover my mouth and nose with my scarf. Emete's husband stabbed his rod into the riverbed, pushing the boat forward in big jumps as the river became thicker near the swampy village and spread out like the lines in the center of a leaf. A large toad was at the river bank puffing its cheeks out, singing a low song. The water was swirling with mudskippers (TSBFA: p.112)

The excerpt above shows the effect and damage of oil spillage in the environment, especially the water and its corresponding consequences on the economic survival and wellbeing of the woman. This embodies socialist ecofeminist ideology, highlighting the link between women's struggles and environmental degradation, particularly in oil cultures. It illustrates how ecological neglect, exemplified by Blessing's reaction to an oil-polluted river, creates oppressive conditions for women reliant on natural resources. The environmental damage reflects the economic hardships of marginalised communities. Additionally, the resilience shown by the ''toad'' and Blessing symbolises ecofeminist resistance to patriarchal and capitalist exploitation.

In Warri, Mama's family grapples with a multitude of challenges, including parasites, polluted water, contaminated farmlands, and ongoing political instability. They must also adjust to an environment devoid of the fundamental social amenities and infrastructure they once enjoyed in Lagos. Throughout these hardships, Mama shoulders the burden of responsibility, serving as the caregiver, protector, and nurturer for her children. She navigates the degraded surroundings, striving to ensure her family's well-being and safety, despite the absence of basic necessities and support systems. This grim reality of Warri can be traced back to the reckless exploitation of the environment driven by petrol culture and the capitalist patriarchy.

The female characters in the novel are portrayed as victims of both environmental degradation and societal oppression in the Niger Delta, instigated by capitalism. Ezekiel articulates his frustrations and laments the difficulties they endure, stating:

Do you know where we are moving? It is the parasites you should be worried about. What about my allergies? That place is so bush. I doubt they even have medical facilities (TSBFA: p.14)

Watson skillfully foreshadows the dire situation in Warri through Ezekiel's touching laments, vividly depicting the immense suffering and enduring pain that Mama is compelled to endure due to Father's abandonment. It is evident that while the characters residing on Allen Avenue in Lagos face difficulties primarily stemming from pollution, such as the noise from cars, generators, and the immoral activities of prostitutes, the environmental disasters in Warri pose even greater risks to their wellbeing. Consequently, one could argue that if the degraded state of Allen Avenue, the initial setting of the novel, renders the characters homeless and fatherless, then the subsequent setting in Warri, ravaged beyond repair, will bring forth even more peril for them as a result of oil exploration and exploitation

Despite being a region rich in natural resources and contributing to the nation's wealth, life in Warri becomes soulless for the woman. The characters experienced poverty, live ***in constant*** *fear of violence and inhabit a severely polluted environment. This portrayal aligns with the principles of ecofeminism, echoing Engel's (1925), belief that disregarding the consequences of our interactions with nature leads to detrimental outcomes. Engel warns that ''When we ignore the consequences of our interactions with nature, our conquest take revenge on us'' (p.209).* In other words, when we mistreat the environment, we ultimately suffer the consequences, particularly women who are most affected.

Due to the devastating impact of the polluted environment, the community of the narrative experienced a significant number of deaths. As a result Celestine, Alhaji's second wife decides to take on the role of a

town mourner in order to address the increasing fatalities. On the other hand, Mama, along with other members of the local population, found employment as a waitress. This situation serves to corroborate Yerima's (1989) statement that draws a parallel between oil and kolanut. Yerima avers that ''oil is like kolanut, the people who grow it are different from people who eat it'' (p.115). This suggests that those who cultivate oil are distinct from those who benefit from it, just as the people responsible for its production are different from those who consume it. This analogy underscores the disparity in roles and responsibilities within the oil industry, highlighting the divide between those who are directly affected by its negative consequences and those who indirectly benefit from its extraction and production.

Mama's depiction of the environment of the western oil company vividly illustrates the stark contrast between those involved in oil production and those who reap its benefits. She recounts her experience in which the compound appeared luxurious and idyllic, creating the impression of a utopia. This stark juxtaposition highlights the distinction between the individuals who own the oil living in challenging conditions, and those who enjoy the privileges and wealth derived from it without experiencing hardship firsthand. Mama says:

'It's like a palace' . . .the Western Oil Company compound. A completely different world. Everything is clean, even the floors. There are seven swimming pools, a golf course'' (TSBFA: p.86)

The highlife Bar. The oil workers go there to watch the wildlife as much as drink from the table we were sitting at. I can see a troop of monkeys travel across the trees it's like a national park. Honestly, I can't believe that the other side of the wall is another world. One minute you're in oily swamp, the next five star luxury, cool, air conditioned, five star luxury (TSBF; pp.86-87)

The contradiction between the harsh swampy conditions in Warri and the luxurious environment enjoyed by the oil workers serves as a powerful reflection of the double oppression faced by the local community, particularly its women. Mama being employed by the very company that has polluted their land, finds herself caught in another perilous situation. It is within the confines of the bar that Mama encounters Dan, a white man, who Ezekiel perceived as a double oppressor. Like many other **foreigners in the Niger Delta,** Dan feigns care and concern for his preys while indirectly exploiting them. Dan's actions exemplify this assertion, as he provides for Mama and her family, while benefiting from the environmental degradation caused by the activities of his own oil company.

Dan appears to be a caretaker while also playing a role in perpetuating the problems faced by the community. This double oppression is not lost on Mama's son Ezekiel, who confronts Dan when he offered a gift of a chocolate bar during one of his visits**.** Ezekiel's reprimand serves as a powerful rebuke, highlighting the contradictory actions of the oil workers while exploiting the community's resources and then try to placate them with token gestures. Ezekiel says: *You give me a chocolate bar? A chocolate bar? Offer to help me find a school. Well, instead of that, I'd prefer my country back please '' The words hung in the air long after they were said, like the smell of fish long after it was eaten'' (TSBFA: p.290).*

He further adds;

You people come here, Ezekiel slammed his fist down unto the table top, making us all jump. ''and take over our women'', he looked at Mama, ''and our money. And our jobs. He looked at Alhaji. Nobody moved. You pay people to kill us and rape our land, then our women. And you give me a chocolate bar (TSBF: pp. 290-291)

Ezekiel symbolises the people of the Niger Delta and through his character, Watson sharply portrays the exploitative nature of Western Oil Company, often with the collaboration of the government in the region. The oil company not only exploits the poor masses, their lands and their livelihood, but also subjects their women to further oppression and exploitation. To Ezekiel, Dan is no different from other oppressors who have contributed to the degradation of the environment, the exploitation of women and the vulnerable children in the region. This realisation fuels Ezekiel's anger and determination to put an end to the degradation of the land and the mistreatment of women**.**

Blessing becomes acutely aware of the detrimental impacts of environmental pollution, particularly on women when she began accompanying her grandmother to assist with births in their local community. Witnessing firsthand the dire consequences of pollution on women's health, Blessing felt compelled to share her discoveries with her brother, Ezekiel, who in turn was able to speak up against these effects during a meeting held in their community compound. The activities of the oil companies, according to Ezekiel: *give us respiratory diseases, cancers, makes our women suffer miscarriage and make our children deformed. Some of the stories I hears from my own sister, who is an Assistant Birth Attendant prove that air is poisoning our women (TSBFA: p.202)*

This highlights the dire situation of the Niger Delta region. Ezekiel lists various health issue plaguing the community, notably respiratory diseases and cancers. This suggests that the polluted air they are breathing is directly contributing to these life threatening conditions. The presence of harmful pollutants in the air caused by industrial activities in the region, is not only affecting the overall health of the community, but is particularly impacting on women. The mention of women suffering miscarriage is a powerful indication of severe consequences of environmental pollution on their reproductive health. It suggests that exposure to toxic substances is posing a serious risk to pregnancies leading to tragic outcomes. This is an alarming reality faced by many women in the Niger Delta region, where pollution has reached dangerous levels.

The reference to deformed children in the novel further emphasises the profound and long-lasting impact of environmental pollution on women. It implies that the toxic pollutants are not only affecting the health of pregnant women, but are also causing developmental issues in unborn babies, resulting in deformities. This reveals the tragic situation faced by women living in a polluted Niger Delta environment, where oil companies bribe the government officials and community leaders to allow them burn toxic gases and harm the local environment. Women and children bear the brunt of these consequences as they become the most vulnerable victims in such circumstances.

Therefore, in his pursuit for revenge against Dan and his associates, Ezekiel chooses to take drastic measures by joining the ''Sibeye Boys.''Their plan involves sabotaging the oil pipelines, seeking to cause damage similar to what the oil company had done to the environment. ''It was revenge.'' Grandma in a discussion with Alhaji explained in few words: *It was Ezekiel'' said Grandma, eventually ''joining that gang of Sibeye Boys. Over twenty Boys in hospital now. Breaking a pipeline. An explosion like that imagine (TSBFA: p.246)*

Tragically, this act resulted in an explosion that claimed Ezekiel's life and caused casualties among others. Consequently, Mama and Blessing were left in a state of immense distress and turmoil due to the dramatic turn of the events.

Blessing's journey towards maturity and personal growth is a transformative experience as portrayed in the novel. She transitions from being ''just a girl'' to evolving into a determined and independent woman. Despite the environmental crises and dire poverty she faced while living in Alhaji's house, Blessing follows her grandmother's footsteps by becoming a birth attendant in the local community. Her decision to drop out of school, sacrificing her own education so her brother could continue, showcases her selflessness and resilience. Against her mother's disapproval, Blessing assists her grandmother in providing midwifery services to the community. By doing so, she feels liberated from the violence and destruction that plague her surrounding, finding meaning in saving lives. This work is particularly significant as the local women in the community, who are mostly farmers and fisherwomen, are impoverished and lack access to basic health-care due to the devastation caused by pollution resulting from oil exploration in the region.

Blessing and her Grandmother's role as birth attendants aligns with ecofeminist principles in several ways. Ecofeminism recognises the interconnectedness between the exploration and exploitation of nature and the oppression of women. In this context, the pollution and destruction of the environment caused by oil exploration disproportionately affects the livelihoods of women in the community. By assisting in

child birth and providing essential health care support, Blessing not only addresses the immediate needs of the women, but also symbolises a form of resistance against the harmful effects of environmental degradation. Her work as a birth attendant expresses solidarity with the marginalised women, and thus, highlights their resilience and ability to nurture life amidst adversity. It showcases how Blessing actions are woven into the fabric of ecofeminism, emphasising the importance of caring for both the wellbeing of women and environment.

Also, Celestine's job as a ''Town Mourner'' aligns with ecofeminist principles in the context of the Niger Delta region. The region is plagued by violence, diseases and deaths and Celestine's role as a mourner allows her to contribute positively and constructively to the community in the face of these challenges. By taking on this job, Celestine acknowledges the pain and loss experienced by the community, particularly the women who bear the brunt of these crises .Celestine's job as a mourner not only provides comfort and support to those who have lost loved ones, but also serves as a form of resistance against the harmful effect of environmental degradation. Through her role, she highlights the resilience and strength of the women in the community who continue to mourn, survive and thrive in the face of adversities.

In particular, the birthing activities of Blessing and her grandmother serve as a powerful parallel to the life-giving qualities of the earth. Just as the earth nourishes and sustains all living beings, women, through their ability to give birth, hold the remarkable power to bring new life into the world. With this understanding, Blessing and her grandmother carry out their occupation in a way that honours and celebrates the unique qualities of women. Watson recognizes that by embracing the similarities between the birthing activities of the women and the life-giving qualities of the Earth, we can truly appreciate the profound interconnectedness of all beings and their dependence on one another for continued existence.

Ecofeminism highlights the importance of humans and nature maintaining a harmonious relationship based on unity, care and cooperation. Both nature and women have been subjected to oppression under a society dominated by men. Tiny Sunbirds Faraway emphasises the exploitation of women and the degradation of the natural world and that the fight for women's liberation is intertwined with the ecological battle against the destruction of nature. Collard and Contucci (1989) assert that: *Feminist values and principles directed towards ending the oppression of women are inextricably linked to ecological values and principles directed towards ending the oppression of nature. It is ultimately the affirmation of our kinship with nature of our common life with her, which will prove the source of mutual wellbeing. (Pp.137-138).*

Ecofeminism sees the struggles to end the oppression of women and exploitation of nature by male-dominated societies as scared mission to protect the lives of both humans and non-human beings. It cautions against solely viewing the world through a male perspective and advocates for a feminist approach that seeks to restore harmony in the global environment, which is severely threatened by the mistreatment of both nature and women. Ecofeminists argue that the better treatment of the environment can only be achieved by dismantling oppressive hierarchies in human society. Watson's narrative aligns with these ecofeminist concerns by depicting women as deeply connected to nature and as victims of male oppression.

In the degraded Niger Delta region, women suffer greatly due to the devastating impact of the environment. They face exploitation both from the activities of the oil companies, foreign oil workers and patriarchy. This exploitation not only harm the natural resources from which women derive sustenance but also exacerbates their vulnerability. Consequently young individuals from the region such as Ezekiel feel compelled to join groups like the 'Sibeye Boys' and bear arms in an attempt to protect both women and nature from further exploitation and degradation.

However, in the degraded Niger Delta environment portrayed in the novel, women take on constructive and beneficial roles, such as Celestine, Alhaji's second wife, working as a town mourner and Blessing and her grandmother attending to births, despite being underpaid or unpaid. These actions not only benefit the individuals involved, but also contribute to the prosperity and wellbeing of the community and

nature itself. Thus, Watson's portrayal of women in the novel goes beyond ecofeminist themes, exploring also potential solutions for women's emancipation in such environments. The ecofeminist perspective emphasises the importance of changing our interaction with nature and working in harmony with both to create a sustainable environment that ensures safety and empowerment for all individuals.

Similarly, Kaine Agary's Yellow Yellow portrays the close relationship between oil, women and the natural environment, highlighting the interconnectedness and mutual subjugation they face. This connection calls for an ecofeminist inquiry, which seeks to address the joint exploitation and degradation of women and their environment. The narrative highlights the grim realities faced by women and nature in the Niger Delta, particularly in relation to the destructive activities of multinational oil companies and d emphasizes the overt and covert ways in which female characters and nature are subjected to oppression and abuse, showcasing how the suffering of one leads to the misery of the other.

Yellow Yellow also sheds light on the oppressive role played by patriarchal capitalists in the Niger Delta, both towards women and nature. From the very beginning of creation, rural dwellers have viewed the land as a source of sustenance, providing all their fundamental needs. As a result, the members of the Niger Delta, who primarily rely on farming, engage in agricultural activities. However, since the discovery of oil in the region, the actions of oil explorers have caused more harm than benefits to the people, particularly the women. Agary vividly portrays the patriarchal and cultural victimization that women are subjected to due to the dire conditions in their environment. The women in the novel experience sexual exploitation from both foreign and local men because they are compelled to survive in an environment degraded by the activities of oil exploration. Thus, the novel delves into the plight of women in the Niger Delta region in the hands of patriarchal structures**.**

Agary's narrative is set in a rural Ijaw village in the Niger Delta which is heavily polluted due to crude oil spills. The story revolves around the protagonist, Zilayefa, her mother, Bibi, and other rural women who suffer from the consequences of living on barren and polluted land. The depiction of different settings in the Niger Delta helps readers understand the difficult conditions faced by women in the region. There are two distinct spatial settings: the village, which represents poverty, filth, polluted water, and land degradation, and the urban city of Port Harcourt which symbolises comfort and wealth enjoyed mainly by male characters, including both white foreigners and Nigerian capitalists, who objectify women for their own pleasure.

The rural setting in the novel primarily focuses on female characters - young girls, single mothers, and abandoned wives, whose lives lack prospect and are devoid of educational opportunities. Teen pregnancies result in many children which contribute to the struggle for survival faced by the women in the village. The environmental degradation caused by crude oil spills affects not only the land and waters, but also the lives of these women in the novel. The pollution of the environment exacerbates the hardships faced by women, limiting their opportunities and compromising their wellbeing. Hence, the exploitation and mistreatment of women are deeply intertwined with the degradation and abuse of the natural environment and therein lies the connection between women and nature**.**

Agary in Yellow Yellow also establishes a connection between the invasion and devastation of the Niger Delta region and the violation of women's bodies. The environmental degradation symbolizes the mistreatment of women, with both land and women being treated as commodities for exploitation in the pursuit of profit and power. This desecration of the earth and the oppression of women are intertwined forms of violence and dominance, rooted in oil exploration, exploitation, and a patriarchal mentality. The physical landscape, particularly the farmland of peasant women who rely on agricultural yields for their sustenance, is compromised by oil spills, leaving these women feeling powerless and frustrated**.**

The beginning of the novel highlights the biting effects of the degraded ecology on women. It begins with the poignant portrayal of Bibi's profound frustration as she visits her once thriving farmland, only to find it desolate and drowned in the aftermath of an oil spillage. The narrator vividly captures the overwhelming emotions that engulf Bibi as she confronts the devastating consequences of the ecological

disaster inflicted upon her land by the unrelenting force of oil exploitation. Zilayefa's voice resounds with her mother's plight, as the spilled crude oil seeps into her farmland, causing her to abandon it. The narrator utters:

I was at home one day when she returned shortly after leaving the farm… When she got to the house, she knocked on the door and said very coolly, ''Zilayefa, bring me my bathing soap and sponge'' . . .''What happened?'' I asked.

''Oil Zilayefa'' she said and turned away from me walking toward the river . .

''Oil from where?'' I was walking behind her, and then I heard people shouting. A group of people painted in the same black as my mother, some covered from head to toe, was marching to see the Amananaowei, the head of the village. I joined them to find out what had happened. It turned out that some of them had also lost their farmland that day. They were marching to the Amamnaowei house to report the matter and demand that he takes it up with the oil company. Some were crying, others were talking about compensation. (YY: pp.3-4)

This scene from Agary's Yellow Yellow is imbued with a deep sense of loss and hopelessness, reflecting the destructive effects of corporate greed on the lives and livelihoods of local women in the community. Bibi's deeper ties to the land amplify her suffering as she witnesses her once thriving and colourful farm transformed into a desolate wasteland, serving as a poignant reminder of the environmental devastation wrought by multinational oil companies. The narrator poignantly describes this harrowing experience thus:

During my second to last year in secondary school, one of the crude oil pipes that ran through my village broke and spilled oil over several hectares of land. My mother's farm included. I was at home that day when she returned shortly after leaving for the farm . . . (YY: p.3)

I left them and ran to my mother's farm. It was the first time I saw what crude oil looked like. I watched as the thick liquid spread out, covering more land and drowning small animals in its path. It just kept spreading and I wondered if it would stop, when it would stop, how far it would spread. Then there was the smell. I can't describe it but it was strong- so strong it made my head hurt and turned my stomach. I bent over, and retched so hard I became dizzy. (YY: p.4)

This description effectively portray not only Bibi's individual anguish and disillusionment, but also highlights the severe results of excessive exploitation and vulnerability of the Niger Delta's ecosystem. This directly endangers the means of survival and prospects of the impoverished villagers, specifically the women depicted in the narrative. Bibi's encounter with the oil spills showcases the harsh realities faced by the marginalized woman in the face of corporate exploitation. Through Bibi's involvement with spilled oil, Agary demonstrates how ecofeminism intertwines the suffering of the land with that of women. The spilled crude oil, a byproduct of the pressure exerted by multinational oil corporations on the Niger Delta's environment, hinders Bibi's personal fulfilment and undermines her agricultural productivity**.**

Bibi's response to the spilled oil highlights the struggles faced by marginalised women and the environment. Instead of joining others in filing complaints with the local community leader, Amananaowei, Bibi chooses to go to the river with her daughter. By opting not to seek help from the male community leader, who is seen as collaborating with the petroleum companies that exploit their environment, Bibi showcases her lack of trust in Nigerian/Niger Delta patriarchal leaders. These leaders are seen as accomplices to the multinational oil corporations whose actions harm both women and the natural world.

Bibi's decision to go to the river reflects her close connection to nature. She turns to the river for purification, aiming to rid herself of the trouble caused by the patriarchal capitalist system driven by crude oil. She hopes that immersing herself in the river will cleanse her, leaving her free from the black stain of contamination. However, her quest for physical purification becomes complex. The effectiveness

of her cleansing is uncertain and unachievable because the very river she seeks purification from is also degraded and polluted due to the mixture of spilled oil. This underscores the deep connection between Bibi as a woman and the deteriorating state of nature, emphasizing the challenges they both face.

Bibi's intimate connection with nature firmly establishes the impossibility of escaping the filth, which symbolises the intricate web of oppression. Together she and nature bear the enduring burden of this entwined suffering. In her quest for purification, Bibi faces the harsh reality that physical cleansing alone cannot free her from the contamination of the degraded river. In recognising the limitations of earthly purification, Bibi shifts her focus to the metaphysical realm as her only refuge. However, with a determined step away from Amananaowei, the patriarchal oppressor, Bibi, finds solace in the embrace of the river, symbolising nature. The connection between Bibi and nature becomes the basis for symbolic healing and cleansing. They become partners in their shared journey of enduring and overcoming hardship. This alliance between woman and nature becomes the cornerstone of metaphorical healing and cleansing, as they become steadfast partners in their shared journey of enduring and overcoming suffering**.**

In the rural setting of the novel, one can easily see how ecofeminism reveals the inequality faced by women in the Niger Delta region. Bibi like many others has been oppressed by a patriarchal system that has silenced her. Zilayefa ponders; *What could have happened that left her (Bibi) void of words. . when she was upset, she got very quiet (YY: p.3)*

Bibi's silent state symbolically represents the ongoing frustrations, neglect, and powerlessness experienced by both the women and the environment in the Ijaw villages. Her inability to raise her voice reflects the marginalised position of traditional African women, depicting their inferiority in the face of exploiters; such as multinational oil companies and local patriarchal capitalist like the Amananaowei and Admiral Amalayefa. These exploitative forces treat both women and nature with little regard or value.

Zilayefa expresses grief over the devastating impact of the current destruction on Bibi and the natural surroundings, leading up to the tragic confrontation with western multinational oil companies and their Nigerian collaborators, who are causing immense damage to the Niger Delta. Zilayefa laments:

Farming and fishing occupations that had sustained my mother, her mother and her mother's mother no longer provided the gain. I had witnessed land claimed by massive floods during the rainy season, the earth slowly melting into rivers. Women rowed their canoes further and farther away to find land for farming. In addition, every year, it was hard to catch fish (YY: p.39)

Contemporary women in the Niger Delta suffer immensely due to ecological degradation, as it not only affects their surroundings but also hinders their ability to achieve personal fulfilment. The devastating impact of multinational oil companies and African patriarchal capitalists engaging in destructive activities becomes painfully evident as the narrator reflects on the memory of the past when nature flourished before the degradation of the environment:

Those were the days when Ijaw woman cooked a fresh pot of soup every day because the rivers were teaming with fish. Their farms held plantain trees so fertile that there was more plantain than anyone knew what to do with – roasted, boiled, mashed, green, and yellow, the possibilities were endless. Those were the days (YY: p.40)

In the past, the fertility of the land and rivers formed a powerful union with a woman's unwavering determination to thrive and provide for the family. During this era, she not only cultivated crops and caught fish to sustain her loved ones but also defied societal expectations by striving for self-sufficiency. This close connection to the untainted embrace of Mother Nature served to accentuate her exceptional qualities as she partnered with her surroundings to ensure the continued prosperity and productivity of both the abundant land and its people. The harmonious and symbiotic relationship between African women and the land and rivers create an extraordinary environment reminiscent of the paradisiacal Eden, where nature acted as a loving and nurturing mother, guiding and fostering the welfare of her children.

In the face of the devastating oil spillage that engulfs the farmland, the authorities and the government not only fail to address the issue, but also wrongly attribute the environmental catastrophe to acts of sabotage. The oil drowns the farmland and the animals and also pollutes the environment and makes it uninhabitable for humans. The narrator exposes the helplessness thus:

The community took the matter up with the oil company that owned the pipes, but they said they suspected sabotage e by the youths and were not going to pay compensation for all the destruction that the burst pipe had caused. And so it was that, in a single day, my mother lost her main source of sustenance. However, I think she had lost that land a long time ago, because each season yielded less than the season before. Not unlike the way she and others in the village had gradually lost, year after year, the creatures of the river to oil spills, acid rain, gas flares . . .(YY: p.4)

This refusal to acknowledge the true source and impact of the disaster deepens the helplessness experienced by the peasant woman. As the oil spreads, it not only drowns the once fertile land and kills the animals, but it also pollutes the surrounding environment, rendering it inhospitable for human habitation.

The profound interconnectedness between the woman and nature is depicted through the portrayal of the devastating consequences of the oil spillage. The woman's very survival and wellbeing are inseparable from the health and vitality of the land and its natural resources. As the land becomes overwhelmed by the toxic presence of oil, it mirrors the woman's own marginalisation and powerlessness in the face of oppressive systems. The destruction of the environment directly impacts her ability to provide sustenance and support for herself and her family. This interconnectedness underscores the urgent need to address the interconnected forces of environmental exploitation and subjugation. By highlighting the devastating consequences of the oil spillage on both the woman and her natural surroundings, the novel invites reflections on the interconnected ways in which the oppression of women and the environment are intertwined**.**

Bibi's connection with the earth becomes evident as she experiences the dual betrayal and abandonment endured by both herself and the desecrated environment. Despite being exploited and left behind, Bibi retreats into her inner world, determined to create a better future for her daughter in her role as a single mother. Bibi immerses herself in the immense task of raising her daughter, driven by a fierce determination to ensure that Zilayefa achieves success where she herself fell short.

Bibi's commitment to improving her daughter's life is exemplified in her self-sacrifice. She willingly denies herself comfort, understanding that she must shielded Zilayefa from the devaluation and oppression inflicted upon women by patriarchal structures. She firmly believes that education acts as a catalyst for liberation, providing her daughter with the means to break free from the grip of domination. This conviction drives her to prioritise Zilayefa's education above all else, even distancing herself from social In a connection that mirrors her own suffering, Bibi labours tirelessly, toiling and scrapping the land in order to fund Zilayefa's education. Bibi's connection with the earth becomes a representation of her own perseverance in the face of hardships and her unwavering commitment to creating a better future for her daughter. The narrator says;

She would make sure that I accomplished what she had not. She had inherited a small piece of land from her family. She farmed, and sometimes she would go fishing. With the proceeds she was able to feed us and pay my school fees. She took care of all my needs and even went without sometimes to make sure I got an education. For instance, she expelled herself from the women's group so that she would not be forced to spend money on wrappers for their outing (YY: p.8)

Bibi, earning a living through tilling the soil shows how intricately she is connected to nature, illustrating the ecological interdependence between African women and the environment. The act of selling her agricultural produce to fend for her daughter's education exemplifies nature's economic provisions and its ability to support women like Bibi in the absence of paternal support. With pride, Bibi holds onto the hopeful believe that her independence and the opportunities she creates for her daughter challenge the patriarchal systems in place. She proudly hopes that:

I (Zilayefa) would go to the university and study a subject that will get me a good job enough to care for myself, then I could take care of her when I could finally take care of myself, the spirits of the water would tie my womb and make sure that for my ungratefulness, I never experience the joy of motherhood (YY:p. 65).

However, Bibi's hopes of financing her daughter Zilayefa's university education through the earnings from her farmland are shattered when an oil spill occurs, devastating and contaminating her sole means of livelihood. The narrator skillfully portrays the heartbreaking scene thus;

The day my mother's farmland was overrun by crude oil was the day her dream for me started to wither, but she carried on watering it with hope. The black oil that spilled that day swallowed my mother's crops and unraveled the threads that held together her fantasies for me (YY:p.10)

The devastating impact of the oil spillage on Bibi is unmistakable. As the crude oil saturates her farmland, it not only destroys the physical land, but also erodes her hopes and dreams for her daughter. It can be argued that the destruction of the land is a metaphorical destruction of Bibi's efforts and aspirations. This profound loss extends beyond Bibi herself, affecting the next generation, particularly her daughter.

Bibi is left shattered and traumatised as her sole means of providing a better future for Zilayefa is obliterated. The future that Bibi had envisioned for her daughter, one that surpassed her own truncated dreams, is now in ruins. Akong and lloeje (2011) aptly observe that:

Bibi, as a woman, symbolizes nature, and just as the environment is devastated by human actions, so too is Bibi devastated by the loss of her livelihood and the destruction of her hopes as he puts it ''the woman symbolizes nature and as man continues to devastate the environment so also is the woman devastated (p.80).

The interconnectedness of the woman, the land and the environment is demonstrated as the devastation inflicted upon nature which mirrors the devastation suffered by Bibi and her aspirations. We can see that the Niger Delta region is suffocating as a result of the activities of oil exploration, causing psychological harm especially to women. This evil activity of oil exploitation in the region seems to support the assertion made by Catherine Obianuju Acholonu (1995) that: *. . .the earth is suffocating from humanity's waste from all the fumes and chemicals humanity has been pumping into her blood (the rivers and oceans) and her body (the soil). In this and other ways, we have been killing off not only our mother earth but also other occupants of the planet- our brethren- who comprises the vegetation, the minerals and the animal kingdom (p.118)*

The human activities, such as polluting the air, water, and soil, are harming the earth. It suggests that our actions are not only damaging the planet but also affecting other living beings like plants, animals and minerals. Referring to the earth as our mother emphasises the interconnectedness of all living things. Man is not only killing the earth, but also he is destroying himself, his present and his future.

Women in the Niger Delta face fear, poverty and a degraded environment caused by irresponsible oil exploration. This includes issues like chemical pollution, gas flaring, high infant mortality and dehumanisation through sexual assault. These interconnected problems of environmental devastation and exploitation of women are central in ecofeminist theory. The deteriorating environment prevents Zilayefa's mother from fulfilling her dream of providing her daughter with good education. When her mother's farmland is destroyed by crude oil, Zilayefa remembers the ruination;

I saw the thick liquid spread out, covering more land and drowning animals in its paths . . .and so it was that a single day, my mother lost her main source of sustenance (YY:p.4).

Women and nature as a whole bear the brunt of immense suffering in the face of environmental degradation. Both entities experience the consequences of a devastated environment characterised by decay, ruin and the depletion of resources, which ultimately leads to misery, filth and death. This distressing reality is vividly captured by Ojaide's (2013) portrayal of the Niger Delta communities,

where: *The health hazards are enormous and go unchecked such as methane and other chemicals that poison the people from the air they breathe, the land they farm and the water they drink (p. 88)*

Among the affected population, women in particular, bear the heaviest burden of misery. As primary caregivers and allies of nature, they experience the full weight of ecological degradation. Zilayefa serves as a poignant example of this struggle as she carries the brunt of harmful effects caused by environmental decline. In her lament she experiences the deep anguish caused by these circumstances. She says;

My ears still rang from maternal wails piercing the foggy days when mothers mourned a child lost to sickness or to the deceptively calm water that lay hungry below the stilt waiting to swallow the children whose unsteady feet betrayed them before they had learnt to swim. How many more times could I bear the pain like razor blades slashing my private part because the river water that washed it was the same water that received the waste rejected by the body in an attempt to cleanse itself? The water that flowed with streaks of blue escaped from the pipelines that moved the wealth beneath my land and into pockets of the selected few who ruled Nigeria was the same water I drank (YY: p.110)

The narrator vividly describes the devastating impact of ecological degradation on both women and the environment. The sound of mothers mourning cries echoed in their ears, symbolize the grief and sorrow that arise from losing children to illness or drowning in the polluted waters. The calm appearance of the water masks it insidious, dangerous, and ready to consume children who have yet learn how to swim. The pain endured by the narrator is depicted as akin to razor blades slashing their private parts. This metaphor emphasises the anguish caused by the contaminated river water that is used for cleansing, yet is the same water that receives the body's waste. The interconnectedness between the physical suffering experienced by women and the environmental contamination is clear. This also highlights the interdependence of women and nature, demonstrating ecofeminist principle, which posits a parallel between the oppression and exploitation of women and the destruction and degradation of the environment.

The degradation of the environment represented by contaminated water, mirrors the degradation and suffering inflicted upon women. The water that carries the wealth extracted from the narrator's land and fill the pockets of the privilege few is the very same water they are forced to drink, and this highlights the unjust distribution of resources and the vulnerability of women to the exploitation of the environment. Thus, Agary reveals a powerful connection between the degradation of the environment and the suffering experienced by women, aligning with the ecofeminist principles that seek to address and challenge these interconnected form of oppression.

The devastating oil spill leaves Zilayefa's mother unable to support her daughter, plunging Zilayefa into a state of desperation to find ways to survive. Tragically, similar to Bibi's experiences, Zilayefa's journey into the city leads to her confusion and disorientation regarding her sexuality. She becomes a victim of sexual exploitation at the hands of two predators from the city: Sergio, a Spanish businessman, and Admiral Amalayefa, a retired naval officer. These individuals driven by capitalism, take advantage of Zilayefa's vulnerability and this further exacerbates her hardships.

Admiral forces himself on Zilayefa, robbing her of her innocence as a woman. The narrator describes how he coldly observes her tear-filled eyes and callously remarks ''now you're a woman. Don't worry, it gets better'' (YY: p.144). This display of Admiral's power over Zilayefa signifies her vulnerability as a disadvantaged individual being exploited. Admiral's actions are akin to violence imposed upon defenseless woman, similar to the helplessness experienced in nature's most fragile states. Admiral's inherent exploitative tendencies lead him to distance himself from Zilayefa by cutting off communication with her. This leaves her feeling restless and uncomfortable for a period of two weeks, as described by the narrator*:*

After our first sexual encounter I did not see Admiral again for almost two weeks . . . I waited to receive a message from him and expected his driver every other day. I was torn and worried about the one-sidedness of the relationship. I had to decide that I was ready to deal with seeing him on his own terms and at his own time. But already I felt jealous of everything and everyone who had his attention (YY: p.149)

Admiral relates with Zilayefa on his own terms, he disregards her emotional feeling because she is a minor who is not up to his social status, but one who can be used and dumped. He sees her when he chooses to and at every point of their meeting, he exploits her sexually, thereby turning her to his sexual slave. Chibuize (2011) notes that:

He (Admiral) travels out without telling her. He seems ignorant of the relevance of his presence to her. Whenever she needs him, he thinks it seems that money is and should be everything to her. So, he gives her chunks of money to spend in lieu of his company. He gives more attention to his incessant crowed political meetings and unending business trips than the time allotted to this girl friend of his (YY: p.17)

Zilayefa, who is a young girl, is deliberately kept hidden by Admiral in his bed room from his business and political associates. He feels embarrassed about showcasing her before his influential friends and guests, despite his known involvement in exploiting and abandoning other young and innocent girls. At the knowledge of Zilayefa's pregnancy, he abandons her and moves on to the next unsuspecting victim. Zilayefa laments:

Admiral had become distant but I was not sure if it was because he had moved on to the next young girl (YY:p.173)

Confirming Admiral's brutalization of Zilayefa's sexual identity and motives, Chibueze (2011) notes that ''Admiral's relationship with Zilayefa has remained in his terms. It is not a parity-based relationship. And she lacks voice to address this partially arranged relationship'' (p.17).

The relationship between Zilayefa and the Admiral, who is significantly older than her, serves as a symbolic representation of exploitation. This exploitation is connected to the degradation of the Niger Delta environment. Just as the natural resources are plundered, young women like Zilayefa are subjected to exploitation. The character of the Admiral embodies patriarchy and represents the privileged class who benefit from the labour and resources of the masses. Admiral entices Zilayefa with material wealth, using it as a means to manipulate and control her.Ziayefa confesses that she gave up her virginity to Admiral thinking this will endear her to him. However, she discovers that Admiral only wanted her as a play thing and for sexual gratification. He treats Zilayefa as a commodity by paying her in advance to use her body. Zilayefa captures this scenario when she says:

. . .he reaches under the seat and brought out a bundle of money which he handed over to me. ''for your running around''. I was taken aback. I refused to take the money but he insisted so I thanked him and bolted out of his car. I was embarrassed. I was not expecting him to give me money ...I questioned and reasoned and still I was not comfortable with the bundle of money I had held in my hand (YY: p.139)

The excerpt above clearly delineates a male dominated environment where women are exploited and regarded as a means to an end. Ecofeminists vehemently reject power based and oppressive relationship and advocate for a society where women would be respected as women and men as men. They also prescribe healthy and egalitarian environment where everyone can thrive. Admiral and other wealthy and influential men in the novel, are depicted as individuals who prioritize their own interests and gains over the well-being of the communities from where the oil is obtained. They actively benefit from the degradation and exploitation of the environment, which has dire consequences for the local communities, particularly women. Zilayefa is taken advantage by these powerful men. Just as the environment is exploited for personal gain, these men exploit women for their own desires without considering the impact it has on the women's lives or overall societal development. Admiral likes holding court in his large apartment where:

They talked about how the oil companies were using the Nigerian armed forces as their private security details to terrorize and sometimes kill innocent villagers who questioned the inequality of their situation-living in squalor while barrel of oils pumped out of their land provided luxury that surrounded the oil workers and the elite of Nigeria. They held heated debates about which Ijaw man had disappointed the entire group as a people by his non-performance in position of political and economic power. There were

discussions about who would be suitable candidates for political power if and when the opportunity came, economically and socially (YY: p.158)

Admiral manipulates and exploits various parties to maintain his economic and social dominance. Through deceitful tactics such as blackmails, he coerces the oil companies into providing him with more money, taking advantage of their reliance on the resources of the land. Additionally, Admiral holds significant influence over the local community, positioning himself as a leader who can mediate between the oil companies, the government, and the affected communities. However, this façade of leadership is merely a means for him to secure his own wealth and power, as he shows little concern for the well-being of the exploited women, the oil companies, or the ecological degradation caused by their activities.

Zilayefa becomes pregnant and fears that if she has a baby, she will end up like her unsuccessful mother. The negative consequences of her involvement with the powerful capitalists in the city make her regret her choices. She decides to break the cycle of having children who are unwanted and often neglected due to circumstances they grow up in. Zilayefa chooses to have an abortion, making a vow to herself to not have any ''more and more of my kind'' African profits'', ''born troways'', ''Ashawo-pickins'', ''father unknown'' - running around the slums of Port Harcourt (YY: p.171).

Zilayefa's pregnancy illustrates a deep connection between the woman and nature. This connection is rooted in their shared fate and productive qualities. Zilayefa's pregnancy reflects the concept of the earth as mother, being pregnant and giving birth to various living entities such as plants, trees, and creatures. This symbolism highlights the profound relationship between women and nature, especially in terms of their productive and nurturing qualities, aligning with the ecofeminist theory. According to ecofeminism, there exists a parallel between the oppression of women and the domination and exploitation of nature. The idea of Zilayefa's pregnancy mirroring the fertility of the earth further reinforces this connection. Both women and nature are seen as vessels for the creation and sustenance of life. Zilayefa's body serves as a source of nourishment and growth for her unborn child, much like the earth provides a nurturing space for all living entities to thrive. Additionally, Zilayefa's pregnancy showcases the power and agency of women, as they possess the unique ability to bring new life into the world. This parallels the regenerative abilities of nature, which continually gives birth to new forms of life. Both women and the earth demonstrate their strength and resilience through their capacity to create, nurture and sustain life.

Moreover, the theory of ecofeminism asserts that women and nature share an interconnectedness based on their shared vulnerability and need for protection. Zilayefa's experience of being pregnant highlights the vulnerability of women during this phase of life, as they rely on support and care both from their own bodies and from the surrounding environment. This vulnerability extends to the natural world, which requires preservation and care to ensure its own reproductive capacities and continued existence. Thus, Zilayefa's experience symbolises the productive and nurturing qualities associated with both women and the earth, underscoring the significance of women as bearers and nurturers of life. This connection resonates with the ecofeminist perspectives emphasizing the need for the protection and preservation of both women and nature in a world that does not respect their essential role in sustaining life

However, Zilayefa demonstrates her strong resolve to avoid contributing to the cycle of fatherless babies by turning to nature for help. In a poignant twist of irony, she uses fresh leaves to induce an abortion and terminates her pregnancy. By utilising the power of nature, which has often been victimised by patriarchy itself, Zilayefa symbolically removes the burden of the patriarchy from herself and liberate herself from their oppressive forces. This connection between the woman and nature emphasizes her agency and resilience in the face of patriarchal exploitation.

Zilayefa's embodies the power of quiet but impactful actions in the face of environmental capitalist entanglement. She recognises the destructive effects of patriarchy and its degradation of women and nature and takes it upon herself to manipulate nature in order to counteract these negative consequences. As a modern day woman, she is astutely aware of the implications of the degradation of women and nature, and she makes a conscious effort to distance herself from the manipulative tactics of capitalism.

We may conclude that the exploration of the connection between women and nature is a central theme in Yellow Yellow. Zilayefa, the main character, and her mother, experience a deep connection with the environment, which mirrors the exploitation and subjugation that both women and nature face at the hands of patriarchy and capitalists exploiters. Zilayefa's journey is characterised by her pursuit of freedom, which initially leads her to offer her body to be used and discarded by capitalist agents. However, she soon realizes the insincerity of these relationships, recognizing that she is seen as disposable, just like the natural resources exploited in her region. This realisation, highlights a parallel between the treatment of women and the environment. Both are seen as commodities to be exploited and discarded by patriarchal and capitalist systems. Zilayefa's resolution to relieve herself of her pregnancy signifies her rejection of these oppressive forces and her collaboration with nature, a fellow victim subjected to the same exploitation.

Yellow Yellow thus, emphasises the entanglement between oil, women and nature, illustrating how their oppression is interconnected. Agary's exploration of this connection sheds light on the urgent need to challenge and dismantle the structures that perpetuate the exploitation and subjugation of both women and the environment. The novel serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of recognising and nurturing the bond between women and nature, striving for true liberation and freedom from the yokes of patriarchy and capitalists exploitation.

Recommendations

1. Encourage local communities to adopt sustainable practices that respect both women and nature, such as supporting local farming, echo-friendly resource management, and renewable energy initiatives that reduce reliance on fossil fuels
2. Develop educational programmes focused on ecofeminism, environmental rights, and social justice to empower women to advocate for their interests and tse of the natural world, fostering leadership in environmental movements
3. Amplify the voices of women in environmental decision-making processes by instituting initiatives that ensure their representation in community councils, policy-making bodies, and environmental organizations, allowing their experiences and insights to shape sustainable development efforts.
4. Encourage community-based initiatives that foster collaboration between women and their ecosystems, promoting projects like community gardens, local clean-up campaigns, and wildlife conservation efforts to strengthen women's roles as custodians of the land.
5. Conduct research to assess the impacts of petrol culture on women and environmental degradation, using findings to advocate for policy changes that highlight the interconnectedness of gender inequality and environmental issues, ensuring that women's rights and environmental protections are upheld.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of oil, women, and the Earth through an ecofeminist lens in Christie Watson's Tiny Sunbirds Faraway and Kaine Agary Yellow Yellow underscores the profound interconnections between environmental exploitation and gender oppression. The pervasive influence of petrol-culture is not merely an economic phenomenon; it represents a complex web of socio-political dynamics that pervade th lives of women and the health of the planet. This relationship manifested in the ways that oi extraction disrupts local communities, often leading to displacement, loss of livelihoods, and a deterioration of social structures that traditionally support women. In both narratives, the impacts of oil exploitation serve as a backdrop that highlights not only the environmental degradation but also the intimate ties of women of their natural surroundings.

As natural resources are aggressively exploited, the environment suffers, resulting in habitat destruction, pollution, and climate change, which disproportionately affect women –particularly in marginalized communities where they are often responsible for foraging for food, water, and fuel. In Tiny Sunbirds

faraway, for instance, Watson illustrates the reliance of women on their local ecosystems, emphasising their roles in sustaining families and communities amid the encroaching devastation brought by oil companies. The pollution that result from oil extraction threaten their ability to provide for their families, thereby further entrenching gender inequalities.

Similarly, in Yellow Yellow, Agary portrays how the socio-environmental ramifications of oil exploitation reverberate through women's lives, disrupting not only their economic independence but also their connection to cultural identity and heritage. The struggles faced by female characters resonate with a shared grief for their land, drawing parallels between the exploitation of nature and the systemic marginalization of women. The narrative captures the fierce bond women have with the environment, revealing how their resilience is often intertwined with the health of the earth itself.

Both novella intricately weave narratives that reveal how the adverse effect of petrol culture extend beyond the physical degradation of nature to impact the very fabric of women's lives. The characters' journeys illuminate an urgent need for a holistic understanding of how environmental and gender issues intersect in the fight against oppression. This reflection demands recognition of women's agency in ecological movements and the necessity of including their voices in the discourse surrounding natural resource management. In this way, Agary and Watson not only highlight the struggles against the destructive forces of petrol culture but also advocate for an inclusive approach that honours and empowers women as vital participants in the stewardship of the earth. Their works ultimately call for a reevaluation of the socio-political structures that perpetuate these cycles of exploitation, urging a collective movement toward equity, sustainability and environmental justice

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