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Weeping of Women and Nature in Tess Onwueme's *Then She Said It!*

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the theory of Ecofeminism ,which elucidates how capitalism and patriarchal society treat women and nature. Moreover, it studies the effects of gender categories to show how social norms unfairly control women and the environment. This study explores how Tess Onwueme's *Then She Said it* dramatizes the combined tyranny of nature and women. It emphasizes the devastation caused by oil firms colluding with local authorities to exploit both. The playwright examines the historical oppression of Delta women and the environmental damage they endure, using dramatic visuals and dialogue to illustrate the harsh realities of pollution and poverty. This study examines the contradiction between the prosperity of oil companies and the poverty of people in the regions where these companies operate. Furthermore, it highlights the parallels between women's experiences and nature in terms of pain and resistance, emphasizing how both have become sources of strength for change. This offers new perspectives on

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societal evolution. It is an open critique of the capitalist system and patriarchy, which convert women's bodies and natural resources into commodities for profit.

Keywords: capitalist, commodity, ecofeminism, nature, patriarchy pollution, women

بكاء النساء والطبيعة في مسرحية "ثم قالتها" لتيس أونويم

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المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة نظرية النسوية البيئية التي تركز على كيفية معاملة المجتمع الرأسمالي والذكوري للنساء والطبيعة. علاوة على ذلك، تدرس تأثير الفئات الجندرية لإظهار كيف تتحكم المعايير الاجتماعية بشكل غير عادل في النساء والبيئة. تستكشف هذه الدراسة كيف تقوم مسرحية تيس أونويم "ثم قالت ذلك" بتجسيد الطغيان المشترك للطبيعة والنساء. وتسلط الضوء على الدمار الذي تتسبب فيه شركات النفط بالتعاون مع السلطات المحلية لاستغلال كليهما. تبحث الكاتبة في التهميش التاريخي للنساء في منطقة الدلتا والأضرار البيئية، مستخدمةً في ذلك الصور الدرامية والحوار لتوضيح الحقيقة المروعة للتلوث والفقر. كما تفحص هذه الدراسة في التناقض بين ازدهار شركات النفط وفقير الناس في المناطق التي تعمل فيها هذه الشركات. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تسلط الضوء على التشابهات بين النساء والطبيعة في آلامهما ومقاومتها، وكذلك كيف أصبحوا مصادر قوة للتغيير، مقدماً وجهات نظر جديدة حول تطور المجتمع. إنها نقد مفتوح للنظام الرأسمالي والذكورية، اللذين يحولان أجساد النساء والموارد الطبيعية إلى سلع لتحقيق الربح.

الكلمات الدالة: الرأسمالية، سلعة، النسوية البيئية، الطبيعة، المجتمع الذكوري، التلوث، النساء.

INTRODUCTION

Then She Said It! is a theatrical piece that Onwueme wrote it based on her depth discussions, interactions, and interviews with rural women in Niger Delta. The playwright presents the historical marginalization of rural women and the oil resource domains in Niger Delta (Becker, 2002). The region known as the Niger Delta comprises nine states that are home to more than 40 ethnic groups, as well as a diverse range of languages and dialects. These ethnic groups are commonly referred to as micro-minorities due to their comparatively smaller population size in relation to the total populace of Nigeria (Woynarski, 2020). Part of Nigeria's southeast is located to the Niger Delta, which is the main oil resource for the nation. Nigeria is number five in the world for oil production. Ironically, the area that produces the majority of the country's riches and, consequently, the world economy is also the poorest (Nixon ,2011).

The situation has worsened since Shell began conducting official oil mining operations in the area in 1958. Subsequently, several international companies collaborated with the Nigerian government to exploit the oil reserves in that region. These companies, which include Shell and Chevron, profit handsomely from the exploitation and suffering of the community. Rural residents are facing terrible conditions because of the region's ongoing pollution caused by oil production. One of the witnesses describes the aftermath of an oilfield explosion in the Ogoni town of Dere as a huge swathe of crude oil pouring down like a powerful river in a flood, swallowing up everything in its path. Long stretches of palm trees yams, cassava plantations, streams, and wildlife. The problem is made worse by the lack of piped water supply because the streams—the only source of drinkable water—are clogged with oil. It is not possible to collect rainwater in a container from the trees, plants, and roofs because they are all oiled. Starving men and women are forced to submerge themselves in oil to harvest cassava and yams that have already broken down (Nixon ,2011).

The play unfolds within the fictional setting of Hungaria. Persistent inquiries and apprehensions drive the challenges faced by emerging females who engaged in a theatrical movement to instigate change and challenge conventional norms. The marginalized women seize the spotlight to articulate their complaints and advocate for their cause on the global stage, striving to disrupt the hegemony of multinational powers and socioeconomic elites that have subjugated them for an extended period. Despite their land's wealth and influence in domestic, regional, and international affairs, the people endure severe deprivation and hardship (Onwueme, 2002). In conflict zones, women, in particular, often bear the brunt of sexual violence, displacement, and poverty(Saeed & Rasheed, 2024).

1.LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers have used ecofeminism theory as their theoretical framework in works of literature, but quite a little has been applied on Tess Onwueme's *Then She Said It*. The play explores topics of environmental exploration, women's oppression, and the impact of capitalism on nature and women. For instance, Jeanne Weiland Herrick's (1999) article, "And Then She Said: Office Stories and What They Tell Us about Gender in the Workplace" studies gender, communication, and power in the workplace through ethnographic narratives, challenging assumptions about gender roles. Jeremiah S. S. Methuselah in his work (2010) "Engendering Women in Onwueme's Drama: Then She

Said It! Discussed” analyses Tess Onwueme’s play within Nigerian Delta crisis, empowering portrayals of women and reshaping narratives about their agency. Leigh Gilmore (2017) in “He Said/She Said: Truth-Telling and MeToo” examines the MeToo movement, highlighting its impact on narratives of sexual violence and survivor testimony, disrupting traditional power dynamics. Likewise, Chijindu Daniel Mgbemere (2018) “Gender and Sexism in Then She Said It! And The Missing Face” critiques Tess Onwueme’s portrayal of gender issues, discussing how her plays challenge anti-female cultures while navigating cultural and historical complexities.

2.METHODOLOGY (THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK)

Ecofeminism is a subgenre of feminism concerned with the simultaneous enslavement of women and the environment. The dominance of both women and nature is inseparable. In terms of their influence, women and nature share a strong connection. As industrial societies have developed, interest in the production of commodities has shifted due to the emphasis on productivity and the ability to overcome environmental challenges. An ecofeminist perspective addresses how both women and men interact with the environment. Man has historically linked as well as dominated nature in the name of progress (Warren, 1996). In a male-dominated culture, women have historically been relegated to a subordinate role, with their primary responsibilities centered around fulfilling men's needs and bearing children to continue the family lineage. Typically confined to the home, their duties were largely limited to managing household tasks, reinforcing their marginalization within society (Saeed & Rasheed, 2024). According to ecofeminists, typical male-focused patriarchal activities and attitudes involve the exploitation and dominance of women as Warren (1996) refers to it “the twin dominations of women and nature” (22). Women possess a distinctive bond with the environment, which arises from their routine engagements, yet this interrelation has been disregarded. Shiva contends that women residing in subsistence economies, who engage in the production of resources, are particularly affected by this oversight (Shiva, 2016).

The fundamental claim of materialist ecofeminism posits that Western society has constructed itself in opposition to the natural world. This implies that power is delineated by the capacity of specific individuals and collectives to liberate themselves from embeddedness. It is evident that chronologically women have shouldered the responsibility of physiological time, thereby leaving the domain of social space and time predominantly in the control of men. Materialist ecofeminism points to the particular dynamic represented in gender dualism, this is only one pattern of mediation. Mediation involves both exploitation and exclusion; it means making time, space, or resources for someone else. A materialist ecofeminist identification of women and nature in the context of human society highlights women’s crucial role as mediators. It is essential to note that ecofeminism should not be based on women’s association with nature in terms of biology or ecology, but rather on a materialistic examination of how male dominance is established and maintained. The capitalist system is inherently detached from human values, seeking to quantify all aspects of life through market profitability. It lacks genuine commitment to democratic principles, family values, or the concerns of the general populace, despite rhetorical claims to the contrary (Rasheed & Abdullah, 2023). Women are considered as one of the subjugated groups under capitalist patriarchy,

thus, they bear the consequences of such system. The connection between women and the 'natural world' does not signify an inherent and unchanging essence, but rather points to the exploitation of women's labor, often without proper compensation. This exploitation extends beyond the work itself to encompass women's constant availability. In the societal context, there is a necessity for individuals who are willing to operate within biological time and is prepared for unforeseen events and daily routines. While a materialist ecofeminist perspective draws attention to the specific interplay within the gender binary, it is important to acknowledge that this is just one form of mediation (Mellor, 1997).

3.DISCUSSION

Onwueme's *Then She Said It* explores the consequences of oil industry, another international commodity. The drama specifically addresses the exploitation of oil in the Niger Delta and how environmental injustice and human rights overlap, with women bearing a disproportionately violent burden (Woynarski, 2020). Though the play was written over ten years ago, the playwright is able to predict the increasingly dire situations that are currently receiving a great deal of attention. This statement supports the opinion expressed ten years ago, but it is currently getting more intense. Since then, Nigeria has seen an increase in kidnappings, pipeline sabotage, and other financial crimes (Methuselah, 2010).

Onwueme creates a fictional country that represents Nigeria as Hungeria and splits the stage into the Oil club and the Restricted Area as well as the market square, the center of women's community life. Here, a character centric dramaturgy plays out the tensions between the communities suffering the most from the ecological effects of oil production and those benefiting economically (Woynarski, 2020).

The playwright divides the women characters into two generations the old and the young who cooperate to demand their rights. Moreover, Onwueme shows how women and nature have the same qualities and they are linked to each other. She gives the characters in this theatrical piece names related to rivers or bodies of water. The smaller water bodies reflect the roles of young individuals, constantly evolving and transitioning, while the larger ones represent the old generation and maintain a sense of stability amidst their ever-changing paths. From the old generation, the character Niger is a widow in her middle age who has two daughters: Oshun and Koko. She heads the market of women. Her name refers to Niger river which is the main river in western Africa. After the Nile and Congo, it is Africa's third-longest river (Mabogunje, 2024). Rivers carry a sizable portion of imports, mostly petroleum, and are used to export cotton and peanuts from the Chad region ("Benue River"). Rivers symbolize fertility and life. They have essential role in shaping societies and civilizations. Naming the character Niger and Benue present strength, kindness, care, and leadership (McKenna, 2009). The young Oshun, daughter of Niger and the mistress of foreign director of oil. She works as a prostitute for living. She becomes a representation of her people's struggle for reform after being turned down by her white boss. Oshun indicates the Oshun River which is one of the major rivers in southern Nigeria, draining into the Gulf of Guinea. The river takes its source from Ekiti State. But it is culturally linked to the ancient city of Osogbo. Pollution of this river because of plastic, heavy metals and human generates waste that lands up in the river.

This has become a worryingly threat to Nigeria's Oshun River. The river supports millions of people who rely on the water for agriculture as well as industries. It is an integral part of Nigeria's treasured Oshun-Osogbo sacred grove, a UNESCO world heritage site (Akindele, 2024). By linking the character of Oshun to the Oshun River, the playwright draws attention to the pollution that the river faces, as happens to Oshun. Naming her by Oshun River to indicate how both nature and women are harmonious as well as violated. Koko's name stands for a town and port located in southern Nigeria's Delta state, beside the Benin River. The town still serves as the hub for agricultural trade for the Itsekiri people. Koko serves as the administrative center for the local government area of Warri North (McKenna, 2009). The author's naming of one of the characters after a town and port indicates a deep connection to the cultural aspects and customs of this region. In addition to that, the meaning of the character Koko and what she passed is a miniature representation of the resistance and steadfastness of the people in Nigeria against pollution, the violence of the foreign agenda, and the tyrannical government.

The opening scene of the play describes "the dark center of the village market-square. The space looks bare, tired and sleepy, except for the glowing crescent moon, hanging in one corner of the dominant blue-gray sky" (Onwueme, 2002, p11). Describing the market Square as tired and bare shows the extent of the environmental damage caused by patriarchal exploitation and unsustainable land encroachment practices. This reflects how nature is exploited by the depletion of natural resources. According to Merchant cultural ecofeminism acknowledges the enduring connection between women and the environment by reviving ancient traditions related to the reverence of gods, moon cycles, and the animal realm. Within this framework, cultural ecofeminists often place great importance on intuition, an empathetic mindset, and the mutual reliance of humans and the environment (197). Furthermore, the moon is associated in many cultures with the feminine aspects of life, including growth and renewal. Moreover, it is considered a symbol of the cyclical nature of existence, with its several stages signifying the different stages of a woman's life, from menstruation to pregnancy to childbirth (Bogus). The glowing "crescent moon" (Onwueme, 2002, p.11) symbolizes resistance and hope for continued survival amid darkness. The blue sky that turned to gray shows the pollution caused by the oil fields. It also indicates a feeling of fear among the people. This focuses on the deep connection between environmental depletion and capitalism. The "strident drumbeat greets the world" (Onwueme, 2002, p.11) as it embodies the voice of nature and life that is silenced by the sounds of the "avalanche of gun-shots, explosive sounds, war-drums, and angry voices" (Onwueme, 2002, p.11). The intervention by military forces highlights how this leads to the destruction of the natural harmony of life and nature. The violence that "descending on this tired land" (Onwueme, 2002, p.11) demonstrates the ongoing oppression of marginalized groups and how capitalism affects all aspects of life, from the land to the lives of those who inhabit it.

Many ecofeminist academics promote an idealistic viewpoint while talking about environmental issues. This viewpoint can be seen through the prism of a metaphysical explanation of nature, which acknowledges the cosmic realities inherent in natural occurrences, or it can be understood as a discourse on the ethical or political handling of the natural world. Materialist ecofeminism uses a critical materialist and structuralist approach in opposition to positivist and subjectivist perspectives. Understanding environmental politics requires both a thorough examination of the structural mechanisms

underlying human-environment interactions and the creation of workable plans that pinpoint structural vulnerabilities and possible paths for political action. The dynamics of the ecosystem represent a fundamental aspect of both entities. This serves as a critical point of susceptibility in terms of political control for the overarching authority of humanity. The inherent unpredictability within ecological holism allows nature itself to play an active role in the political landscape of the natural environment. If human activities surpass the ecosystem's capacity to sustain them, a crisis in transcendental conditions will ensue. Nonetheless, the ecosystem's influence alone is insufficient to instigate substantial societal transformations. In the plot where a superior transcendent group manages to maintain all other forms of mediation, it could potentially thrive in ecological harmony with relative ease. However, the prevailing capitalist patriarchy, as the dominant global system, does not hold such a position (Mellor, 1997). The promise that transcendence will someday be extended to everyone, including those who are currently trapped in the hierarchical systems of mediation and parasitism, serves as justification for the transcendence of capitalist patriarchy. Capitalist patriarchy will eventually confront ecological constraints if it tries to expand upon the consumption patterns already attained in the most parasitic economies. The typical Marxian problems of failing to realize profits and being unable to ideologically control those it excludes, oppresses, and exploits will befall capitalism patriarchy if it does not continue to expand its economic reach (Mellor, 1997).

Onwueme names the oil company Shame Vice to highlight the shameful actions of these companies. These companies have become a source of shame instead of pride. The word Vice refers to the unethical methods used in managing natural resources. Shame refers to submission to these shameful practices. Onwueme wants to draw readers' attention to thinking about how horrific capitalist corporate governance is in controlling people's lives and natural resources.

On a hot afternoon at Gra/Oil club, Atlantic the foreign director of the oil club sits with his friends Kanji the national government Official, and Ethiope the traditional chief. They listen to angry voices of the community that scream to leave and go back to their country. Since they have given their people the local government headquarters no jobs are remaining. They tell them to "drink all the oil with their oyibo!" (Onwueme, 2002, p.15). Moreover, they call the white men as dogs. The loud voices of the people against foreigners who represent the oil companies, and their accomplices represent the capitalist exploitation of the country's resources. The negative effects of these industrial activities lead to the destruction of their lands, livelihoods and marginalization of the local people as well as the economic displacement.

The use of the word 'oyibo' refers to foreigners (Obidevine) who come and take benefits from resources of other lands. The white man's dogs indicate the government's complicity with them. The use of these terms demonstrates the extent of the people's dissatisfaction with continued colonial control. This reveals the economic, environmental, and racial exploitation, as the people see that their resources are being drained for the benefit of foreign entities at the expense of the interest of the country and its individuals. Atlantic addresses his friends: "Every day, war agitation. The pipelines are no longer safe. We're losing money...Losing staff...Drilling oil here is fast becoming a dangerous business" (Onwueme, 2002, p. 15). It explains the internal instability in the country due to marginalization policies and inequality. This shows that capitalism does not consider

environmental limits, as it is unable to extend consumption globally without reaching a limit consistent with society's need to extract natural resources.

Man's inherent reactions include killing, uprooting, leveling off, polluting, and destroying, which position him as an adversary of nature. Conversely, woman's natural inclination is to care for, nurture, promote healthy growth, and maintain ecological equilibrium, making her a natural ally of nature. The transfer of man's control over society and civilization, usurping the diverse forms of authority historically held by women, has led to disorganized chaos (Mellor, 1997). In the realm of patriarchy, the phenomena of objectification, hunting, invasion, colonization, ownership, consumption, and coercion are imposed upon nature and women. These actions represent a profound violation of the inherent essence of untamed, unpremeditated existence, akin to the concept of rape. The underlying drive behind such behavior stems from a deep-seated apprehension and aversion towards life itself, affording the one in power a deceptive sense of dominance, authority, and vitality. Analogous to the subjugation of women as a collective entity, the subordination and disempowerment of nature and animals have been perpetuated to bolster the conviction and enactment of the 'natural' prerogatives of men as a collective group (Mellor, 1997).

Kainji talks to Ethiope and Atlantic about the explosion that resulted in the deaths of 250 people. Atlantic describes these lives as "cheap in Africa" (Onwueme, 2002, p. 17). Furthermore, he regards those who died as animals and drinks a toast for this genocide. The Jesse Delta explosion incident has led to huge loss of life among women and children, who are always vulnerable to marginalization due to conflicts and industrial disasters. In addition to this, the indifference and ridicule of Atlantic's reaction reflects the innate tendencies of men to destroy and pollute. Therefore, the patriarchal system views marginalized groups such as women, nature, and children as things that can be enslaved and controlled. Kainji and Atlantic blame the victims instead of admitting their responsibility. The lack of care in the death of innocents is met with the ridicule and celebration of genocide which sheds light on the conflicts witnessed in Nigeria and some African countries whose governments fail to protect their people and manage their resources responsibly.

The white man of patriarchal capitalism is the enemy of women and the natural world. All people, irrespective of culture, philosophy, race, political and economic system, and class will be united by the new politics around basic needs like food, shelter, clothes, affection, care, love, dignity, identity, knowledge, freedom, leisure, and joy to fight this capitalism system (Mellor, 1997). Ethiope and Kainji explain the extent of African citizens' attachment to their land and culture, which is considered the basis of existence and identity. They are ready to die for their land. Kainji knows that they cannot be blamed because the value of man is with his land. This confirms that land is the basis of human worth and dignity. Atlantic responds sarcastically that the value of a person is stocks. This shows the capitalist thinking of the white man as an enemy of life. According to capitalism, value and worth are measured by the amount of money one has. The slogan of this system is profit and control over everything vibrant. Atlantic acknowledges the history of British colonialism by referring to the city as the "city of blood" (Onwueme, 2002, p.19) as they have committed mass massacres for exploiting the country's wealth. Ethiope adds that the colonists have killed millions of people and seized millions of dollars. This shows how awful the capitalist system is. Atlantic stands away

watching the angry crowds. He embodies the capitalism that Mellor critiques the white man. Their restless voices echo loudly despair and anger, demanding jobs, food, and homes. The crowds demand oil companies such as Shame, Chevron, and Killbros-Willbros leave the country due to exploitative practices in oil extraction. The angry crowds ask to give their land and resources back. Their demands stress the injustice and greed of the capitalist system, which has led to the spread of poverty among the population. This fosters a sense of unity and awareness to confront the true enemy. All people, regardless of their background protest patriarchal capitalism. They repeat their basic needs: “We want jobs! We want food! We want homes! Leave our land! Oil! Oil! We have the oil!We want our resource” (Onwueme, 2002, p.23). This is a common phenomenon in regions which are rich in natural resources but struggle with poverty. The word oil that is repeated many times symbolizes both wealth and pain because of the people’s suffering. It is like a curse to these countries that have it. This contradiction affects all regions rich in minerals but still suffering from poverty. The voices of the individuals unite into a collective force directed toward the villa, where representatives of the oil companies reside.

The bourgeois revolutions would not have been conceivable if nature and humanity have not been transformed from a reciprocal, symbiotic relationship into a one-sided master-and-servant relationship. Without the colonization of other peoples and their lands by the white man, the capitalist economy would never have grown. The man treats women and nature as animals to control them. Reductionist science, colonization, sexism, and capitalism are all closely related. Western science’s violence towards nature is a representation of man’s urge to define himself as apart from nature and to harm Mother Nature and other earthly sisters. The man who apparently uses his intelligence to build both himself and nature is the modern scientist. He is the new deity, the European civilization’s cultural hero (Mellor, 1997). That is why the grassroots environmental movement appears. It broadens the understanding of what is required as well as what is feasible. This movement is propelled by tenacity, opposition, obstinacy, fervour, and fury. It is the tale of housewives, in all their manifestations, triumphing over the men of reason across the world. Over the last two decades, the men of reason have been overtaken by grassroots movements advocating for the ownership, management, and use of the environment. Critics of global capitalism and technological modernity have emphasized the negative impact associated with the concept of development on women and the environment. They have demonstrated the disproportionate effects experienced by women due to the intrusion of commercial farming, logging, and mining on their traditional lifestyles, along with their involvement in exploitative and hazardous forms of production. The efforts of environmental and peace movements, in addition to grassroots movements, have shed light on the increasing environmental threats brought about by industrialization and militarization. Nevertheless, certain conflicts seem to underscore the underlying issues and obstacles inherent in such movements, as well as the way they have shaped and unveiled the connection between women and the natural environment (Mellor, 1997).

In the market square where women gather to demand their rights. A conversation takes place between Niger, Obida, Benue, a middle-aged widow, and other women. Niger sympathizes with Obida because she is a teacher, but now she has no job even though such jobs are poorly paid.

NIGER: But why? So who takes all that oil money? And who'll teach the children?

BENUE: Vultures!

NIGER: Both local and foreign breed. (The women laugh.)

BENUE: See? See them hovering in the land?

OBIDA: What do they care?

WOMEN: Yes, what do they care?

NIGER: Except for their own mouths and bellies. 'Dem dem', only.

BENUE: And is that why they should lay off half the workers just because they say they want more profit and can't pay all that salary?

OBIDA: And did you hear how much the so-called leaders spent renovating their mansions in the state capital?

WOMEN: No. Tell us.

OBIDA: Billions!

OBIDA: Enough to feed this nation for centuries! (Onwueme, 2002, p. 32).

The conversation shows how economic hardship affects all groups. Moreover, it highlights oppression and marginalization of women and environment in patriarchal society. While the people struggle to survive, the leaders spend the money to renovate their palaces. The local government exploits resources without regard for the welfare of the population or environmental concerns. It is also a criticism of the capitalist economy, as wealth is distributed in the hands of those in power at the expense of the common people. These practices have led to the deterioration of the natural environment and the economy of the communities that depend on it. These women gather to stand against the capitalist system. They call for their basic rights to save the resources of their land as well as redistribute equitably among the people. While men may have utilized their leisure time for activities such as warfare, trade, and politics, the situation becomes significantly more perilous in contemporary industrialized and militarized societies. A defining characteristic of modern capitalist patriarchy lies in its independence concerning biological and ecological matters. The repercussions on gender dynamics and the environment resulting from economic pursuits are often disregarded as external factors. The social and economic frameworks of the Western world are grounded in an idealistic perception of individualism. The Western male is depicted as youthful, physically fit, driven, mobile, and unburdened by responsibilities. However, this portrayal does not align with the reality experienced by many women. Their existence is constrained by obligatory work carried out of a sense of duty, affection, coercion, or the fear of losing financial backing (Mellor, 1997).

Onwueme represents the community at large by using choral work to foster female solidarity. The gathered women in the market square discuss how they have experienced social and environmental injustices. They wait in queue to apply for one position of a guard that is listed outside the Oil club, and this keeps happening. Even though a large number of them possess degrees, few professions related to oil production are accessible, and those that do not tend to be locals (Wojnarski, 2020).

The countries that produce oil suffer from the curse of poverty and pollution. Oil extraction, refining and oil deposits are harm wildlife as well as water sources. It makes them unsuitable for agriculture and drinking. In addition, oil extraction leads to deforestation for the purpose of extracting oil and constructing pipelines. Pollution also leads to health issues for local people, such as cancer and other diseases. In a conversation between women about how environmental destruction resulting from oil extraction affects their daily lives. Air, water, and soil pollution affects the health and livelihood of local communities. Obida mentions how “They’re not even killing us alone. The trees too!” (Onwueme, 2002, p.33). They argue about their direct experience with environmental pollution. There is no clean air, lack of clean water and firewood as well as the death of livestock. Women act as mediators between nature and society and are significantly affected by environmental degradation. In rural communities, they are the ones who bear the burden of deterioration because of their role in the family and society. Niger tells the women that she will not leave till she has her right. This reflects the strength and determination of women to fight the patriarchal system.

Onwueme dramatizes the real events that Nigerian women experience due to oil companies like Chiffon and Shell. They manipulate people’s lives for profit and material benefit. One of the witnesses describes the situation there; “We can no longer breathe natural oxygen; Rather we inhale lethal and ghastly gases. Our water can no longer be drunk unless one wants to test the effect of crude oil on the body” (qtd. in Nixon,2011, p. 108). This reveals the conditions in Nigeria are unlivable due to pollution. The writer sends direct criticism for the heinous actions of these companies and governments that ignore people’s lives and suffering.

Third World women, whose minds have not yet been colonized or stifled, are in a unique position to call attention to the invisible oppositional categories that they are accountable for. Not only do women bear the brunt of harm, but they also lead the way in developing novel conceptual frameworks for the environment, which is vital in stopping and even reversing environmental disasters. The women of the Third World, as well as the marginalized tribal and rural populations that are kept out of underdevelopment processes, are today the intellectual sources of environmental thought and action. This is similar to how environmental regeneration begins from natural variety hubs. Thus, the idea of marginalization has come to be seen as a way to repair the damaged foundation of patriarchal progress. Those in the greatest risk have the best chance of surviving because they have access to two types of knowledge that are not available to privileged or dominating groups. First, they know what it means to be the victims of progress, the ones who have to carry the consequences and the weight of the load. Second, they have a thorough understanding of the ecological significance of maintaining and protecting life. Their ability to recognize the vitality of nature as a precondition for human existence and the interconnection of nature as a basic need for life is preserved. Women in emerging nations have lost their primary source of income, but their minds are still intact, containing the conflicting ideas that are essential to the survival of all life. Life itself can only be really protected by those who create it. Women take the lead in the restoration of nature because they are ingrained in it and produce life alongside it. Women have historically been the primary sufferers of environmental deterioration, and this has been the focus of much Third World research on women and the environment. The women who spearhead and take part in national ecology movements do not speak only as

victims. They speak for emancipation and transformation, offering fresh perspectives and avenues for investigation (Shiva, 2016).

Niger is the mother figure to all women and the leader of the women's market. She is an old woman with dazzling beauty and eyes that sparkle with vitality. Unfortunately, her sparkle has been extinguished after the loss of her family members. Niger is raped, her daughters suffer the same destiny. Moreover, the Whiteman, and Chief, together with their friends, all have slaughtered her son, and roasted her husband to death. She addresses them in the court; "Why...You took my son and husband. (Passionately) Took them. My love. My life. Speak, you rich and powerful men who ride on the painful back of others. Speak! You who drink and dine on the blood of others" (Onwueme, 2002, p.163). The beauty that she has once is overshadowed by the obvious effects of her grief. Her features are marked with the pain of loss and sadness. For that, she becomes a member of the youth leadership in the social battle.

Women in the market square face the police. As Koko points the rifle at the police, Obida takes hold of the weapon and lunges towards the attendant. Obida screams that she is the fire that end them, but Niger tells her to hold herself because they have "lost too much already" (Onwueme, 2002, p.38). Women play the role of change in their country. Niger is a wise and balanced leader amid a confrontation with the police. She is the voice of reason and the guiding compass within the group consumed by a desire for revenge. This is shown when Obaida becomes angry and wants to attack them. Niger tells her to be careful because they have already suffered massive losses. Niger is a presentation of unity that brings together all women in the market to stand up against injustice. Niger Delta region is endowed with an abundance of natural resources, particularly crude oil. The people's paradoxical poverty is a result of the ongoing oil exploration activities. It carries out by successive Nigerian authorities who hardly ever make an attempt to improve the standards of living for the populace. Therefore, it is not expected that the people turn to crime as successive governments bomb the populace, their houses, and everything else with military force. The people turn to protests for their rights. Niger says to the women, "Even when you die, will they let you be buried? Sleep?" (Onwueme, 2002, p. 123). She shows her awareness of the complexity of the issue that they face. She acknowledges that the struggle does not stop at specific point, but it extends beyond death as well. The playwright mentions Saro Wiwa, a Nigerian writer, who believes in the power of the pen to achieve transformation. He uses his writing to defend the rights of people who suffer from the negative impacts caused by oil companies. Saro faced injustice from the Nigerian government and oil companies. His struggle and criticism of the government led to his unjust arrest and execution. Until the very end, Saro-Wiwa held the belief that his writing will come back to haunt his tormentors.

Women's bodies have been utilized as a bargaining tool in the power struggles involving nations, religious institutions, male household leaders, and private companies. Numerous human rights advocates have emphasized the necessity for women to possess the autonomy to manage their reproductive capabilities, and to acknowledge that the perceived population issue primarily stemmed from impoverishment and inadequate resources. Capitalism, colonialism, militarism, and fundamentalism are established as male-centric systems that subjugate women, with women's pivotal role forming the foundation of procreation within human communities. The term reproduction, in this

context, refers to the means by which individuals fulfill their fundamental requirements and endure from one day to the next (Mellor, 1997).

Oshun represents a stereotypical young woman from the Niger Delta who turns to prostitution as a means of subsistence. She acknowledges to Obaida; “Do we have a choice? We’ve got to survive” (Onwueme, 2002, p.28). Oshun is a target of male gaze who easily markets herself to Atlantic; “Her red short skirt and sleeveless blouse, which taunt the eyes, rudely announce her agile, youthful body mounted above platform shoes....with their greedy eyes poking into her as they’re caught in marking the geography of her body” (Onwueme, 2002, p.13). Those men use women's bodies as objects of desire and power, exploiting them. When Atlantic claims he is the owner of Oshun, it is evident that patriarchal culture views both women and the natural world as property. Oshun uses her body as a method to survive. She says to Obaida, “We’ll keep playing the fool to get what we want” (Onwueme, 2002, p. 26). For her, Atlantic is the tool to gain money since she has no job and lacks financial stability. This is an embodiment of capitalist exploitation. A woman's body is seen by the capitalist system as a resource that can be used for financial advantage. Women’s bodies are colonized by men, and they have historically been used to bargain in different power struggles. Oshun is the voice of marginalized and oppressed women as they demand financial independence. She asks Atlantic who uses her as a sex object. He refuses to give her what he owns to her. Atlantic is the embodiment of a colonial patriarchal society that aims to control as well as destroy both women and nature. When she asks him to pay up his debts, he replies: “I don’t owe you a thing, you worthless pros...” (Onwueme, 2002, p.86).

Obida is 20 years old unemployed teacher. She is the niece of well-known traditional chieftain Chief Ethiope. After Obida's family death, her uncle, Ethiope, sold her to a rich white man. This action triggers her to become involved in the militant actions of the community. Her uncle regularly subjects Obida to acts of betrayal and sexual abuse. Ethiope represents the upper class in the Niger Delta region, who routinely betray their constituents to amass wealth and bolster their status and authority. Obida’s family was one of the victims of violence related to oil extraction. Her parents were killed due to the conflict over oil. Obida tells Oshun about the tragic death, “They killed my father for this oil...And then.. my mother? she was cooked...fried” (Onwueme, 2002, p.26). The world of nature is deteriorated, and oil companies are exploiting the ecosystem, which has a big effect on the locals’ ability to make a living. As a result, people are forced to live in poverty while looking for work. Due to oil contamination, their agricultural grounds are no longer suitable for growing crops. In addition, the rivers’ extensive water pollution from careless oil spills prevents fish population from existing. In addition, they are unable to get drinkable water. All these things lead to destitution. Her mother joins the oil poachers out of need to bring fuel for her family and the explosion occurred. Many innocent people die because of neglecting safety procedures when extracting oil from corrupted companies.

Koko is 20 years old and has no job. She works as a seller or hawker. Koko faces trauma after being raped by several men, including soldiers and state officials. Koko returns from the gate of the Oil/Gra club, running and crying. Niger and the women are terrified realizing the seriousness of the situation. Obida confronts Koko and asks her if she is raped. Koko tells what happens, “All... all of them. Cut deep with their knife. I

fought. Tried... to close my eyes. Tight. (Screams.) Aaah! How I prayed God to close them forever. Bury me, alive. But when I opened, I saw him... grinning... grinning into my face” (Onwueme, 2002, p. 55). The scene depicts the sexual violence to which Nigerian women are exposed and the societal effects it has. As it is stated by women, “They’re raping, selling and killing us”(Onwueme, 2002, p. 56). This tragedy is not individual, but rather a shared one that affects the entire society. Soldiers and police are supposed to protect and serve the people, not violate them. Koko describes the rapist as a thief to stress the violation and dehumanization she has.

Women in Nigeria are viewed as having less agency than males when it comes to the traditional gender roles that are allocated to them. I. E. Nwosu (2012) in his article “Gender Role Perceptions and the Changing Role of Women in Nigeria” states:

Historically, in the typical traditional African Society such as Nigeria, women are not only perceived as inferior to men but are marginalized and denied equal opportunities as the men, and women are treated as “lower gender” or “weaker sex”... the general belief is that the role of women start and end with running of the home and nothing more... women constitute the group at the bottom of the ladder in many developing countries, especially in Africa, in respect of employment, poverty, education, training and status (1240).

The leader offers another deal for Atlantic, in addition to Obida's niece, whom he gives to a rich European man. He offers him a young girl named Koko. He asks him to “Feel free to pass her on to any of your friends over there” (Onwueme, 2002, p. 75). The play presents the trade of women in exchange for material benefits. It is a criticism of the harsh reality and violation of human rights. The chief who is supposed to protect the people is involved in morally questionable transactions with Atlantic. They talk about the exchange of Obida and Koko for Land Cruisers and Range Rover vehicles, which exposes commercial mentalities devoid of ethical considerations. It reflects how the rampant corruption and moral decay in society, where the leader of family members exploits their relatives for personal gain. Obida and Koko are direct examples of capitalist systems that trade in humans and the environment.

Koko is an embodiment of a broken dream and an unfair educational system. She is an intelligent and ambitious who has been accepted into the National University to study law. Koko was unable to go because she was unable to pay the sum of 10,000 Naira due to poverty. Koko narrates the loss of 5 years of her life, full of unfulfilled dreams due to poverty. She tells her mother “What is today’s date? Ha! Years after, after my deadline and I’m still here. Searching... Searching for the deposit to... to... my life” (Onwueme, 2002, p.58). The play is a scathing criticism of the governmental and social failure that destroys the dreams of young people and drives them to resort to selling themselves in order to survive. The playwright succeeds in presenting the unity of destroyed women and polluted nature in the scene of rain. Women convene in the market square to protest as rain begins. The writer illustrates that their strength emerges from their unity.

4.CONCLUSION

This study embodies ecofeminism in analyzing injustice against both women and nature. The title of the study, “Weeping of Women and Nature” presents an ecofeminist perspective that underscores the interdependence of social and environmental issues. It explains how the patriarchal capitalist system’s enslavement and control over women and the natural world has changed a coexisting relationship into one of dominance and control. These patriarchal system perceive women and the environment as resources to be used and manipulated at will.

Then, She Said It! is a harsh critique of capitalism and the patriarchal society that is the cause of environmental degradation and the exploitation of women. The playwright highlights the consequences of oil pollution in the Niger Delta. The names of rivers refer to the relationship between environmental destruction and the suffering of women due to the oil industry. Moreover, the playwright stages the harsh reality of Delta women who are subjected to dual exploitation, their land and bodies. The playwright emphasizes the steadfastness of women against oppression. The main female characters: Niger, Oshun, Koko, and Obida are a mirror of what Nigerien women go through. Onwueme depicts harmony between nature and women as one in their suffering in the scene of rain. The depressed women and polluted nature are crying together because of all the injustices they encounter.

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