

AN ECOCRITICAL READING OF CHIMEKA GARRICKS' *TOMORROW DIED YESTERDAY*

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Abstract

Studies abound on ecocriticism of various African novels, especially novels with motifs of environmental issues. However, few of these studies have concurrently examined gender inequality and environmental issues in particular literary texts. This study is, therefore, designed to critically examine gender inequality and environmental issues in Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*. The study is specifically an ecocritical reading of the novel. Ecocriticism is adopted as theoretical framework of the study. The interpretive design was employed. Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* was subjected to literary analysis. The study demonstrates how gender inequality and environmental issues are explored by the novelist. The roles of government and people as solution providers in environmental issues are also discussed.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Gender inequality, Environmental issues, African novel

Introduction

This research work critically examines gender inequality and environmental issues in Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*. The study is specifically an ecocritical reading of the novel. The field of study that has continued to lead the discourse on environmental issues is Ecocriticism. In his study, Jelica Tosic considers ecocriticism as an interdisciplinary study of literature and environment. He notes that ecocriticism is concerned with "the relationships between literature and environment or how man's relationships with his physical environment are reflected in literature." (43). Ecocriticism as a literary theory investigates the link between literary creative works and biological research with the goal of raising awareness about the destruction of the physical environment and its consequences on people's lives. Apart from Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*, which this has been selected for the purpose of this study, other popular African ecocritical literary works include Niyi Osundare's *The Eye of the Earth* [1986], Charles Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* [1975], Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* [2006], and Helon Habilla's *Oil on Water* [2010]. These literary works go a long way in attesting to the importance that African writers place on issues of environment, thereby countering every ill representation of Africans as promoters of deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, and

perpetrators of all manners of evil against the environment.

Indeed, the relentless effort of the United Nations in respect to gender and environmental issues is a pointer to its significance in such an age and time like this. Out of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators of the United Nations, as of January 2024, seven of them emphasizes on gender equality and environmental issues. They include: Goal 4 –Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; Goal 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; Goal 6 – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; Goal 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; Goal 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; Goal 15 – Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss; and Goal 16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. [*International Institute for Sustainable Development*, March 7, 2024 issue]. Hence, by stressing upon matters of gender and environment, the United Nations identifies the delicacy of these issues. It also goes a long way to establish that matters of gender and environment are very crucial in our world today. Thus, it begs

the attention of scholars and researchers.

This research will examine, critically, the issues of gender and environment in Chimeka Garrick's *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*, a representative example of African ecocritical novel. Ecocriticism as a literary theory “investigates the link between literary creative works and biological research with the goal of raising awareness about the destruction of the physical environment and its consequences on people's lives,” [Buell Lawrence, 1999]

Summary of the Novel

Chimeka Garrick's *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* is the story of four friends, Doughboy [Doye], Amaibi, Kaniye, and Tubo, who grew up together in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. The Niger-Delta region produces most of Nigerian oil and since early 1990s has experienced a lot of conflict caused by tension between foreign companies and the Niger Delta ethnic minority group who felt they are being exploited. This has led to increased militarization in the area and the kidnapping of foreign oil workers.

The novel starts in 2003 when a routine kidnapping of a foreign oil worker by Doughboy [Doye] goes terribly wrong. This kidnapping leads to a chain of events that reunites the four friends. Kaniye is the lawyer in the group, although he hasn't practised law in years and owns a restaurant. Tubo is the self-centred one who works for Imperial Oil, the oil company at the centre of the story. Doye is the leader of a militant oil group that kidnaps foreign Imperial Oil workers, while Amaibi is the lecturer and activist in the group.

The novel explores one of the major challenges facing Nigeria today. These include oil bunkering, oil militancy, the impact which oil has had on everyday Nigerians living in the Niger Delta regions.

Theoretical Framework: Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is the theoretical framework of this study. Arguably coined by William Rueckert in his essay “Literature and Ecology”, ecocriticism has come to mean “the relationship between literature and physical environment” (Glotfelty 1). Ecocriticism studies literature and the environment from an interdisciplinary perspective, in which all disciplines collaborate to examine the environment and discuss potential

solutions to the current environmental predicament. The release of two major books in the mid-1990s formally launched ecocriticism: *The Ecocriticism Reader*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and *The Environmental Imagination*, by Lawrence Buell. Ecocriticism is a new kind of critical thinking that rejects the casual attitude toward the natural world that is prevalent in literary studies (Phillips 578).

Also referred to by such terms as "Green Studies," "Ecopoetics," and "Environmental criticism", Ecocriticism is a literary study field that analyses the relationship between people and the natural environment. It is concerned with how environmental concerns, environmental cultural issues, and attitudes toward nature are presented and examined. One of its core purposes is to investigate how people in society behave and respond to nature and ecological issues. Because of the rising societal focus on environmental degradation and greater technology, this kind of critique has received a lot of attention in recent years. As a result, it is a novel approach to studying and interpreting literary works, adding new aspects to the area of literary and theoretical studies.

Nasrullah Mambrol, in an online write-up, observes that Ecocritics always pose questions such as: How is nature depicted in the novel/poem/play? What function does the novel's physical-geographical environment play in its structure? How do our metaphors for the land impact our treatment of it? In other words, what is the connection between didactic or artistic activity and real political, sociocultural, and ethical behavior toward the earth and other nonhuman life forms? In terms of the consequences of science on the land, how is science—in the form of genetic engineering, reproductive technologies, and sexualities—open to critical scrutiny.

Empirical Review

There have been a few studies on Chimeka Garrick's *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*. According to Lomka Kopdiya, environmental issue is the main subject matter of the novel. Kopdiya (25) posits that the storyline and character analysis of the novel demonstrates that when people ruin the physical world, they lose their humanity and destroy themselves. In his words, the novel “affirms the fact that there is little or no hope for

posterity when a natural environment is destroyed (33). Anwuri and Olanrewaju's research investigates eco-activism themes in Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*. It examines the novelist's characters' environmental concerns and how he has positioned them as significant stakeholders or voices in environmental activism (1). The essay draws heavily on eco-criticism to fight against the Niger Delta people's economic emasculation and the environmental devastation caused by oil activity. The writers draw insight from Lawrence Buell's second-wave eco-critical theoretical approach to investigate environmental issues and advocate for victims of environmental dilapidation (Anwuri and Olanrewaju 1).

Cornel Ujowundu (169) opines that Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* satirizes the corruption of the governing elite and its consequences in society. He argues that the author depicted a corrupt society, paving the path for post-independence disillusionment writing. As a result, instances of tyranny, exploitation, corruption, repression, brutality, intimidation, man's inhumanity toward his fellow man, and, most all, class awareness as it impacts the relationship between the affluent and the poor have been the scourge of society. Tarkpegher Terngu's research is an in-depth examination of illicit oil bunkering, pipeline sabotage, vandalism, and abduction, with reference to Garrick's novel. He stresses that poverty, unemployment, land and water pollution, gas flaring, youth restiveness, insufficient compensation, and a lack of basic utilities such as portable water, power, and schools are identified as driving elements in the Niger Delta mayhem (Terngu 110). This study also tries a comprehensive examination of the crisis's implications and how the problem will be addressed. Terngu concludes that the Niger Delta experience is a "paradox" in which the people have everything they need to be prosperous but are not; they are "surrounded by water but have no water to drink, richly endowed with crude oil but experience petrol scarcity" (Terngu 110).

This study argues that environmental issues are so ingrained in this novel that it deserves a closer scrutiny. Another major gap in literary scholarship the study intends to fill is that none of the previous studies on the novel has concurrently

examined gender equality and environmental issues in the novel. Finally, previous studies on the text have been silent on the roles of the government and people as solution providers in the novel.

While discussing Buell's notion of literature's "experiential or referential qualities," Phillips says that ecocriticism should not be concerned with a referential, accurate, or experiential representation of nature. Buell's impression, on the other hand, is based on a reductive picture of "America-as-nature."

Sociopolitical Unrest and Resistance in Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*

Adopting multiple narrative techniques, whereby the story is told from the perspective of four major characters, *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*, like *Yellow-Yellow* and other Niger Deltan eco-oriented novels, explores issues of "environmental degradation, unethical oil exploration, corruption, military brutality and unprofessionalism, injustice, and cronyism" (Owhorodu 42). The novel was written against the backdrop of the crises caused by tensions between foreign oil companies and the exploited Niger Delta's ethnic minority groups, who grapple with the negative consequences of crude oil exploration in their communities (Owhorodu 42).

Tomorrow Died Yesterday revolves around the awful experiences of Douye, also known as Doughboy, a career crime militant; Kaniye, a lawyer; Tubo, an executive of Amoral oil company; and Amaibi, the lead character, who also happens to be a lecturer and an environmentalist. When a white expatriate named Brian Manning is kidnapped, he (Amaibi) is requested to assist in delivering the ransom sought by Doughboy. Kaniye eventually defends him (Amaibi) in court when he gets into trouble following the death of the kidnapped victim. While Amaibi reunites with his wife, Doughboy dies. Garricks' narrative plunges deep into this tale that revolves around the destinies and intertwined fates of these four men amidst the raging ecological tribulations that prevailed in the Niger Delta.

The four friends relate the tale of oil in their region and its consequences on the locals and the larger Nigerian society against a backdrop of unethical practices, broken institutions, and

injustice. They document the detrimental impacts of oil exploration and exploitation on the Niger Delta's economy, society, and culture. Garricks provides a forum for each character to share their viewpoints. To put it succinctly, the narrative focuses on the socio-economic and political issues prominent in Nigeria's Niger Delta, where it is situated. The devastation caused by improper oil drilling in Asiamia and its surroundings, as well as how corruption encourages it to grow uncontrolled, is vividly described by Garricks.

Bringing the discourse to the plight of Niger Deltans in present-day Nigeria, Ohagwam submits that the Ogoni people in Rivers State have collectively banned oil exploration activities on all their lands and waterways out of fear of additional ecological harm and anguish over having been seriously abused by the British oil giant Shell Petroleum Development Company and her subsidiaries. The region's experience, compared to Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, is the clearest indication yet that successive Nigerian governments have blatantly deprived the Niger Delta of its rights. (Ohagwam 13)

The situation is similar in Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*. The major and remote causes of the traumas experienced in the novel are the discovery of oil in Asiamia community and the coming of Imperial Oil to the region. The company's inability to explore crude oil using internationally approved standards renders the host communities uninhabitable. After a period of these oil activities, the natives notice the fast depletion of flora and fauna such that "the squawking of gulls and egrets on the swampy mangrove banks..." are fast becoming extinct (p. 4).

Oil spills, the discharge of by-products of oil operations such as chemicals or trash –caused by equipment failure, operation accidents, human mistakes, or purposeful damage of infrastructure resulting from criminal activity (Takon, 2014) – are significant consequences of this phenomenon. The Asiamia River, for example, is contaminated by the spill from one of Imperial Oil's pipes. Unfortunately, the corporation hesitates to pay spill victims (fishermen and local neighbours). As a result, the residents of the oil-producing towns are traumatised since the spill causes cultural

relocation, the extinction of their sources of income, and the endangering of their dwelling homes. Doye describes his harrowing experience:

We woke up this morning to see oil, thick and black, floating on top of the brown water of the river. The river became sluggish in its flow as the oil gradually choked its life away. After school, I sat on the banks and watched dead fish, turned on their sides, slowly drift by. The river stank (p. 83).

The deleterious consequences of gas flaring on Asiamia are immense. It contributes significantly to trauma in the oil-producing community since it causes not only loss of livelihood but also death. Many studies have been published on the health effects of gas flaring. According to Piller, Sanders, and Dixon (2007), gas flares and their soot contain hazardous byproducts such as benzene, mercury, and chromium, which reduce people's immunity and make them more prone to disease. The description of the flare stacks in Asiamia paints a picture of their overpowering impact on the residents:

A roaring fire, about ten feet high, marked the tiny uninhabited island where Soboye and twelve other people had gone to steal, or rather, bunker oil. The fire, bright and brilliant, gave enough light for us to see their deep-roasted corpses. Which littered the shore (p. 85)

Garricks' novel stresses that nature should always take precedence because it is at the core of human existence; unfortunately, the reverse is the case, as illustrated by the responses of the major characters to the 1997 incident. Instead of fighting for the environment, every character seems focused on themselves at the expense of the natural habitat. For instance, as a boy, Tubo tells his friends that gas flare-ups are hellfire and that this metaphorically represents the situation in the Niger Delta community in general as well as the status of the environment:

Of course, it's hellfire, Amaibi! Has anyone seen that fire stop burning? Tell me, have you? See the pipe that the fire is coming out from? Well, let me tell you something that you

don't know. The pipe leads straight down to hell. If not for the fire that is coming out of the pipe, you can go down, go deep and you will see the devil himself. (*Tomorrow Died Yesterday* 72).

Ironically, Tubo eventually secures a job at an oil company and does the same thing he criticised as a child, causing havoc for his people. His behaviour might be seen as evidence that most individuals are self-centred and care about their own needs, paying little attention to the bigger harm that continual environmental pollution does to humanity. While Tubo's youth was spent in ignorance, his mature years, like Amaibi's, were spent in selfishness. The image of hellfire, as used by Tubo, reiterates the discomfort, disarray, devastation, and unending agony that accompanied the activities of oil exploiters and the government's insensitivity. The people have been subjected to hell due to the plunder of nature. Perhaps, this explains why Garricks chose to document the people's struggle to survive the horror they are forced to live in.

Referencing Amaibi's maimed leg, Fakemi observes that there is a relationship between Amaibi's experience and the reality of Niger Deltans. Like Amaibi's sensational feelings of completeness even after his leg has been amputated, the people of the Niger Delta have also failed to realise of their incompleteness without the natural world. In essence, an injury to nature is also an injury to man. As such, by protecting the natural environment, man indirectly protects himself. Fakemi puts it like this:

It suggests that just as Amaibi has a "phantom limb", the sensational feeling that his amputated leg is still there, so will the collapsed system in Nigeria be believed to be working, and so will the world at large feel nature is unaffected by their anthropogenic activities. They feel everything is normal and functioning well, but they have forgotten that according to deep ecology, the natural world is an integral part of society, and therefore, if you damage it, you will

cause great damage to humanity.
(Fakemi 12)

To stress further, the preceding excerpt implies that the human body is a system that works best when all its essential components are present – the sociopolitical, economic, and environmental conditions of the Niger Delta might be represented by such a bodily system, along with their bilateral interactions with the environment. It implies that the collapsing system will have a "phantom limb," the illusion that Amaibi's dismembered leg is still there. According to Amaibi's exclamation:

"I can't believe I'm going to lose my leg. No matter how hard I try, my mind can't seem to accept the fact. Perhaps after the surgery, I'll come to terms with it". (p. 15).

The extent of the harm done to nature and its repercussions will not be recognised "until there is a snap out of such phantom limb experience" (Fakemi 12). It also supports the claim that because people have not yet experienced the severe repercussions of their disregard for the environment, they have not yet adopted deep ecology, a somewhat radical viewpoint that challenges the notion that humans are superior to nature.

Gender Inequality in Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*

Confrontations and violence of different sorts emanating from the youths became the order of the day. It became the most practical means of resisting the destruction of their ecosystem and their future survival, as the pursuit of oil and the politics surrounding it continue to pose potential threats to their lives and existence. Many young people in the Niger Delta region have grown dissatisfied, lost faith in the government and its policies and programmes, and instead decided to take control of their destiny in whichever way they saw fit. While some young organisations in the area express their unhappiness and call for change through consultation, debate, and nonviolent protests, other organisations have chosen the route of violence, physical confrontations, kidnapping and militancy, resistance, and the continuous utter ruin of oil pipes and installations. These physical agitations of young people are a direct product of the politics of marginalisation that the region's

people have experienced/

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which is what they are known as in the Nigerian list of vanguard groups, and the Asiamas Freedom Army, as they are called in Garricks' novel, *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*, appear to be the groups that these boys eventually transformed into fully-fledged kidnapers (Ohagwam, 14). In recent times, abduction in the Nigerian Niger Delta area is now a viable and profit-making venture for many young people.

Another aspect of the crisis or social unrest in the area is prostitution. Ohagwam observes that activities related to oil exploration, the influx of foreigners with deplorable character, and the disregard for social institutions like schools and centres for skill development are some of the factors that have contributed to the increase in the act of prostitution among girls and women in the region.

Young girls turn to prostitution as a means of escape, particularly those whose parents cannot cater for their needs. In *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*, the story of Belema, an unrepentant harlot, reveals the region's depth of depravity and obscenity. She and the other ladies in Asiamas earn a living off prostitution. They barter their bodies for cash. Before abduction and oil bunkering became the order of the day, they were most patronised by the expatriates and workers from Imperial Oil's Asiamas Base Camp. "But with the arrival of the 'oil boys', like Doye, their fortune increased because an oil boy could squander in one night the equivalent of the company boy's impressive salary" (Olatunji). Garricks successfully demonstrates the magnitude of the Niger Delta's devaluing of feminine virtue and the commodification of femininity.

The Niger Delta women have been hypnotised by oil money. They parade themselves as sex toys that can be bought cheaply. In the whole of the Niger Delta, the desire to have a share of the oil money has paved the way for so many unspeakable atrocities. Bimbos like Belema and Damiete have lost their dignity and sense of value. These beautiful young women gathered at the Zion Hotel in

Ashawo village every night, waiting for their customers. The commonness of debauchery, as depicted in the novel, signifies the deepening depth of moral decadence in the region orchestrated by environmental degradation. (Olatunji)

Roles of the Government and People as Solution Providers

The government and oil firms continued to weaken the region's growth to the point that nothing seemed recoverable anymore and everything seemed lost. Little wonder the likes of Doye (also known as Doughboy) in *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* believe that violence is the only solution in sight. He (Doughboy) thinks they can only address this misery if they apply force to reclaim what has been taken away. What is worth stressing here is Garricks' attempt to illustrate how Nigerians have contributed to the underdevelopment and raging violence in the Niger Delta region.

By indicting Hausa and Yoruba security officers who were with Brian Manning after kidnapping him, Garricks shows how the nonchalance, the scramble for power, and the activities of non-White oil merchants and government agencies have contributed to the harsh realities in the Niger Delta region. The words of Doye reveal how power politics among the tribes that make up Nigeria have intensified the ill-treatment of humans and the environment in the region:

How can you, a Hausa man, be my brother? When your people were stealing our oil money all these years, was I your brother then? My people have the oil, yet it is your people who have all the jobs in the oil companies. Your people refuse to employ my people. They say we are not qualified. Yoruba man, answer me – are my people not qualified? (*Yellow-Yellow* 6-7).

In the excerpt above, Garricks appears to be clinging to the stereotype that non-Niger Deltans, particularly Northerners, have stolen the region's riches. It also illustrates that the environment is

ruined, and lives and delicate social interactions are wrecked. Doye's future, which seemed quite bright, was shattered by the impacts of oil extraction. Although he graduated from the university with good grades in Petroleum Engineering, he could not find employment. As the natural resources hidden in the dirt of the Niger Delta area are explored and abused, so are the people's dreams and potential.

Following the evils of oil firms in Asiamama and the need for compensations, Catechist Akassa and Sir James opine that the problem of the community was more than a mere demand of some ransom from the government and gruesome oil companies. They mention some more pressing problems that further reveal the people's poor socio-economical standard of living in the region. This is very ironic considering the huge revenue that oil companies in the region must generate.

We have (other) problems in Asiamama. There is no electricity, no potable water, and no hospital... Our schools have produced excellent students, especially this year. But many of the students who are the future of Asiamama, cannot afford to go to the university. They are likely to join many other unemployed Asiamama youths who roam around restlessly, causing trouble... Some chiefs, stony faced, refused to look at Catechist Akassa. Others who did had their anger in their eyes... the chiefs were angry because it did not give them any direct monetary benefit (129-130).

Since the government and oil firms have made people jobless and inactive by desecrating the land they rely on for livelihood, they should, perhaps, not be faulted for attempting to keep themselves busy. As a result, the number of militant organisations in the region increased. Doye is one of those young people whose lives may have been more meaningful than becoming militants if there had been social justice and equitable distribution of oil money. Before deciding to inaugurate a terrorist group, he told Kaniye about his struggle while still job hunting.

Let me remind you of my story, Kaniye. And it's a familiar story with

people from the Niger Delta. I graduated from the university in 1990, with my now useless two-one. I applied for a job everywhere, Imperial, Shell, Chevron, name it. I did more than a few aptitude tests. For three years I was unemployed. The last test was at Imperial Oil. I passed it easily. I got called for an interview... Actually, I was the best at the interview. But they gave the job to one Yoruba boy who also had a two-one. The Personnel Manager at the time was the distant relative or something (233-234).

Garricks as Eco-feminists

The rape of Dise and Amaibi's pregnant wife is one of the awful incidents in the Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*. In examining the relationship between humans and the natural environment, Fakemi observes that Dise represents nature, which humanity has ruined - "His face was contorted with a vicious snarl of triumph" (*Tomorrow Died Yesterday* 284), Amaibi agonisingly writes. The troops defeat her weak body in the same way that people have defeated nature due to their insatiable sexual desire for more. "The natural world is Dise, who has been dominated by the soldiers (humankind) to the benefit of their sexual lust (scramble for development). Amaibi becomes radical from that very day. It suggests that when you damage the environment, you inadvertently damage something in human existence" (Fakemi 13).

Owborodu's comment and analogy on the rape of the women are noteworthy:

Apart from the loss of the region's fertility in terms of her natural resources, the stories of Dise and other female characters that military officers sexually molested buttresses the argument that *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* is an allegory of gender and politics. In other words, the political and economic exploitation and despoliation of the region's resources go hand in hand with that of the females in the region. Amaibi's wife, Dise, is raped by soldiers in the

presence of her husband. Besides, one of the soldiers drives a rifle into her vagina. The traumatic effect of this incident becomes unbearable, resulting in the separation of the couple and the decline of Amaibi's sexual virility. This also makes him lose faith in God. Again, the religious space of Asiama is also desecrated because the rape of Dise takes place in a church vestry. Garricks uses Asiama as a microcosm of the Niger Delta to depict its total exploitation and desecration – spiritually, physically, economically, and culturally. (Owhorodu 43)

Garricks wraps off the story on a positive tone despite all the awful events the various characters have had. Amaibi recovering his lost virility and being reunited with his wife, Dise, may be a purposeful attempt to instil a feeling of optimism in the futility represented by these events. Given that humankind's life depends on the ecosystem's survival, there should also be hope for the environment.

Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* narrates the horrifying event of 1997 in Asiama, which will eventually go a long way in altering the lives of four key characters, Doye, Kaniye, Tubo, and Amaibi, later in life. For instance, after the troops kill his father, Doye loses his vision of the future, destabilised and shattered. On the other hand, Amaibi loses his wife and manly potency due to the same regrettable and preventable military action. Like Doye and Amaibi, other young people in the area experience a great deal of hardship and emotional struggle, which drives them to join the militants as a last choice. As a result, their tomorrow continues dying yesterday at the hands of government institutions like the military (Fakemi 11).

Conclusion

Overall, by engaging with issues of gender and environment, African novelists have proven themselves as worthy writers of international standards. Their in-depth participation in both crucial topics has extensively countered the allegation made against them, by their European counterparts, as supporters of domestic violence, gender inequality, and environmental degradation.

While, on the one hand, all the novels studied stress the environmental challenges in the Niger Delta area and the extremity of poverty that the people grapple with, they also considered more closely the relationship between environmental degradation and the ill-treatment of women. In other words, by examining cases of oil spillages, fuming, and exploitation of the Niger Delta area by rich oil merchants and foreign firms, coupled with the harm caused to plants and animals in the environment, these African novelists also consider the bitter experiences of African women in the hands of both White and African men closely. The harsh realities of the Niger Delta region and how they are projected in the novels cannot be adequately described by the word "poverty." The people's primary sources of income, farming and fishing, are barely enough to keep them alive due to the unending poisoning of the water bodies and soil erosion by oil spillages. Eventually, their sources of income were taken away from them by the chaos caused by the activities of selfish oil merchants and revolutionary bandits.

Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* can also be seen as a scathing criticism of the Nigerian military as pawns to a cruel and corrupt administration and a fictitious depiction of how traditional leaders sell their people, land, and culture for financial advantages. Literature has been utilised as a tool to quell violence and propose solutions to the conflicts in the Niger Delta (Nwahunanya 1). In the novels studied, the authors try to do this by showing how the exploitation of natural resources has hampered socioeconomic development, widened the gap between the rich and the poor, and encouraged the prevalence of social injustice, crimes, and vandalism. The stories depict how the lives of those in the Niger Delta areas are impacted by oil bunkering, oil militancy, and unethical business activities between politicians and oil company personnel.

The stories of the Niger Delta locals striving to make ends meet in the novels represent the larger stories and experiences of the residents of the Niger Delta region, both in the past and present. The stories illustrate the hazardous conditions of having crude oil overrun their farms, harming the crops and deadening the land. This

reoccurring incidence prevented farmers, fishermen, and hunters from engaging in their respective professions. These are mostly the locals' jobs. Youths yearn to escape to the city for a better life since their ecosystem has been eroded and their life prospects have been shattered. The degradation that prevents natives from working and the entry of more foreigners who endlessly exploit the region's natural resources are forms of global capital intrusion and exploitation that have continued to have devastating repercussions for the indigenous populations and their survival. Since Nigeria's colonial era, the Niger Delta region has continually remained at the receiving end of

global capitalist exploitation, the scout for raw oil and other natural resources.

An authorial commentary in *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* perhaps best describe the disillusionment and hopelessness of the Niger Deltans – their failing trust and faith in both the present and future: “There is no future for the children of the Niger Delta. Their tomorrow is already dead. It died yesterday” (p. 162). Despite the height of this disillusionment, however, is the intentionality of Garricks, Habila, and Agary to stress the need for the government and people to join forces together in combating the harsh realities of the locals in the Niger Delta.

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