

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GENDERED ECO-ACTIVISM IN IMBOLO MBUE'S *HOW BEAUTIFUL WE WERE* AND BEN OKRI'S *EVERY LEAF A HALLELUJAH*

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Abstract

As the fight against ecological crisis became more intense in the 21st century, gendered voices have gained prominence in African literature. In the fiction genre, novels such as *How Beautiful We Were* and *Every Leaf A Hallelujah* have typified this trend. While existing critiques of these novels tend to focus on the consequences of environmental degradation, they fail to recognise the complexity of gender dynamics in eco-activism. This paper addresses the gap by undertaking a comparative study of gendered voices in eco-activism, demonstrating how societal gender attitudes intersect with environmental concerns. This study adopts a qualitative comparative approach, employing ecofeminist and postcolonial ecocritical lenses to analyse gendered eco-activism. Using character juxtaposition as a comparative literary method, the analysis juxtaposes key female characters, Thula and Mangoshi, with male figures, Excellency, Wajo Beki, and the Manager. Through the analysis, the paper finds that women are portrayed as more committed, organised, and effective eco-activists while men on the other hand, are depicted as neocolonial agents conniving with multinational corporations in causing environmental degradation, with their actions motivated by greed, corruption and individualism. Drawing on ecofeminist and postcolonial ecocritical perspectives, the paper challenges patriarchy's denial of women's authority and leadership despite their proven potential to lead and deliver results. It submits that nature's conservation and women's emancipation from patriarchy are two projects that intertwine. The article recommends acknowledging environmental crisis as a gendered issue and advocates the importance of women's participation in decision-making, especially in environmental policy, considering their closer relationship with nature.

Keywords: Gendered Eco-activism, Ecofeminism, Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Environmental Degradation, and Comparative Study

Introduction

For about three centuries now, the African environment has been heavily exploited. This environmental degradation, shaped by historical, political, economic, ecological, and geographical factors, manifests differently across regions. In oil-rich regions, ecological crises are closely tied to the extraction of petroleum and the petro-capitalist economy, while dense forest regions have continued to grapple with the problem of deforestation and biodiversity loss. Recent ecological studies by Karmakar and Chetty 2023, Lundberg et al 2022, and Gasztold 2022 proposed that these environmental problems rooted in

colonial legacies are sustained by global capitalism.

This development laid a fertile ground for the emergence of literary works that are challenging and raising awareness about ecological crises and their socio-political impacts. Such ecological works foregrounded the intersection between environmental degradation and human vulnerability with a special attention to marginalised populations. Biama et al. 2022, Madete and Omondi 2025 and Afolayan and Oladeji 2025, harmonised ecofeminist and postcolonial ecocritical perspectives in underscoring the gendered aspect of

environmental crises, arguing that in such works, women are highly vulnerable due to their marginalisation by patriarchy and capitalism.

Amidst these critical debates on ecological literature, existing works on *How Beautiful We Were* and *Every Leaf a Hallelujah* tend to focus more on environmental degradation, postcolonial exploitation, and cultural identity. Few who have attempted the gendered interrogation of texts have done so in isolation, focusing only on female agency, thereby overlooking the comparative examination of gendered eco-activism. This existing gap in the literature highlights the major research problem: how are gendered roles in eco-activism constructed, juxtaposed, and evaluated in African eco-literary narratives, and what do these depictions reveal about the socio-political structures? Addressing this problem will not only advance the ecofeminist theoretical framework but also make a significant contribution to postcolonial ecocritical debates on African literature. In view of the above, this paper undertakes a comparative analysis of eco-activism in the two selected novels to foreground the nuanced gender roles in eco-activism.

Objectives

The study seeks to:

1. investigate how gendered eco-activist roles are represented in the selected texts.
2. Examine the roles, agency, and gendered perceptions of men and women in eco-activist struggles.
3. Interrogate the effect of patriarchal and capitalist systems on man's interaction with the environment.
4. analyse ecofeminist and postcolonial ecocritical research by offering a comparative gendered perspective.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and comparative literary methodology grounded in close textual analysis. More specifically, the research employs character juxtaposition as a comparative strategy. Major female characters, particularly Thula and Mangoshi, are compared and contrasted with male characters like His Excellency, Wajo Beki, and the Manager. This comparative method offers a systematic

examination of patterns of agency, resistance, and complicity across gender lines. This methodology is considered suitable as it facilitates highlighting the hidden patriarchal and capitalist influence on gendered ecological activism in the selected novels.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on ecofeminism and postcolonial ecocriticism, not as parallel interpretative models, but as interdependent frameworks that synthesise entangled histories of environmental degradation, gendered subjugation, and colonial exploitation in a cohesive whole. Rather than presenting these theories as distinct conceptual categories, the study brings them into critical conversation, demonstrating how each extends and deepens the explanatory reach of the other. Ecofeminism, a term first articulated by Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974, describes the interrelationship between the subjugation of the feminine gender and the abuse of the environment (Ajogbor 20). As Cheryll Glotfelty observes, ecofeminism consolidates feminist and ecological concerns by exposing the domination of women and the abuse of nature (xxiv). This suggests that ecofeminism interrogates the shared subjugation of nature and women caused by patriarchy and capitalism. It urges women to take responsibility and resist both female and environmental exploitation. Elaborating on the activist mode of ecofeminism, Gaard and Murphy describe ecofeminism as a feminist movement that champions the welfare of women, their families, and their communities. It focuses on the concerns of women and the destruction of the environment by patriarchy and capitalism (2). Gaard and Murphy's view underscores the place of resistance in ecofeminist agitation for women's rights and environmental justice.

Ecofeminism occupies a unique position in contemporary academic discourse. It emerged as an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that synthesises ecological and feminist thought into a cohesive whole. Zhang, Jiamin characterises ecofeminism as a fusion of feminist and ecological ideas (1), sharing feminist values such as gender equality and non-patriarchal structure and subscribing to the ecocritical ideology of human-

environmental relationships, extending into environmental activism. Taken together, these positions underscore the theoretical distinctiveness of ecofeminism as it presents a new theoretical contribution that neither pure feminism nor ecocriticism has fully captured.

Complementing ecofeminism is postcolonial ecocriticism, developed by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin. Huggan and Tiffin's postcolonial ecocriticism interrogates how pervasive ecological crises in formerly colonised nations are deeply connected to colonial legacies (viii-ix). Ecofeminism represents an interdisciplinary intersection of postcolonial theory and ecocriticism and addresses significant limitations of the two theories. While ecocriticism interrogates the relationship between man and environment without properly addressing the colonial and capitalist impacts, postcolonial ecocriticism occupies the space between ecocriticism and postcolonialism, demonstrating how ecological issues in postcolonial countries are deeply connected to colonial legacies (Khan and Riaz 36). By so doing, Huggan and Tiffin effectively blur the boundaries of these disciplines, demonstrating how continuing imperialist modes of cultural, economic and environmental dominance could be challenged by formerly colonised subjects.

Advocating for the dismantling of imperialist mode of economic and environmental dominance, Huggan and Tiffin offers an ideological orientation positing that the central task of postcolonial ecocriticism is contesting Western ideologies of development (27). The development that is only realised through the overexploitation of the physical environment of the less-developed nations. This critical perspective is further developed with the idea of "state vampirism". as a western strategy for the continued exploitation of the former colonies. Andrew Apter used the term "state vampirism" to describe how former colonial leaders sponsor local corrupt individuals into leadership positions to collude with them and maintain their grip on power in the formerly colonised nations. (Khan and Riaz 373). This neocolonial practice, which exacerbates imperial control in postcolonial

nations, resulting in the continued exploitation of the environmental resources of the once colonised nation, resonates in contemporary eco-literature, where ecological degradation is sustained by political corruption and economic dependency.

Integrating ecofeminism and postcolonial ecocriticism in this study produces a more coherent analytical framework capable of accounting for the intersections of environment, gender, and power. While postcolonial ecocriticism historicises ecological crises by tracing their roots to colonial and neo-colonial structures, ecofeminism particularises these crises by foregrounding their gendered implications. In other words, where postcolonial ecocriticism explains the origins and global dimensions of environmental exploitation, ecofeminism reveals its intimate, embodied, and gendered consequences.

In the application of the two theoretical premises, this addresses the problem of environmental destruction influenced by historical colonialism, capitalist growth, and imperialism. It also focuses attention on the landscape as a medium of both resource extraction and resistance. Simultaneously, the researcher employs ecofeminism to analyse the representation of women characters in the works and to illustrate their exposure to the discrepancy in environmental disasters and their engagement in the fight against both environmental and patriarchal violence. This combined and critically engaged approach offers this work a more conceptually coherent interpretation that leads to the interconnectedness of ecological injustice, gender oppression, and postcolonial contexts

Critical Review of *How Beautiful We Were* and *Every Leaf A Hallelujah*.

This section undertakes a review of scholarly works on *How Beautiful We Were* and *Every Leaf A Hallelujah* with a focus on postcolonial ecocritical readings, gendered ecofeminist resistance, ecocritical and cultural readings, magical realism, activist consciousness and emergent research gaps.

Postcolonial Ecocritical Readings: Capitalism, Coloniality, and Environmental Crisis

A critical reading of Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* situates the novel within the literary domain of postcolonial ecocriticism, notably for its harmonisation of capitalism, extractivism, and colonial legacies in a single narrative. Critics such as Lundberg et al maintain that, during the era of colonialism, African regions were perceived as sites of mineral resources awaiting harvest. According to the colonialist hypocritical narratives, the exploitation of African virgin lands for natural resources was a crucial component to install civilisation in Africa, which destroyed the African environment, people and their belief systems (2). While this position convincingly historicises ecological despoliation, it demonstrates how colonialism, hiding under the guise of development and civilisation, greedily exploited the untamed human and natural resources, degrading the landscape and causing cultural disruption. The so-called development impoverishes formerly colonised people, and in this case, the Kosawa people. *How Beautiful We Were* fictionalises this so-called development that has been ongoing in most countries of Africa, most especially oil nations.

Reflecting on the postcolonial ecocritical standpoint of the novel, Karmakar and Chetty maintain that the novel chronicles a disturbing ecological crisis shaped by oil extraction, structural racism, and global capitalism (125). Their contribution deepens the analysis by linking environmental degradation to economic imbalance; however, their emphasis on macro-structures tends to underplay the novel's narrative strategies and localised articulations of resistance. Similarly, Brygida Gasztold argues that the novel exposes the sustained impact of colonial exploitation on post-independence African nations. (196). Yet, like earlier studies, this reading would benefit from a closer engagement with how Mbue's narrative method, particularly, its collective voice, mediates ecological memory and loss. Taken together, these studies converge in their examination of Kosowa, a postcolonial site where environmental capitalism, coloniality, and environmental crisis intersect. Their arguments are

weakened by inability to interrogate gender vulnerability and responses in the midst of ecological crisis.

Gender, Resistance, and Environmental Activism

Interrogating Mbue's narrative, as an ecological novel grounded on resistance, activism and gender dynamics, Biama et al. argue that Mbue constructs resistance as a veritable tool for the fight against environmental degradation, situating the novel within a broader corpus of African eco-activist literature (314). Their contribution treats environmental resistance in relation to gender dimension, foregrounding women's leadership, particularly through the character of Thula, whose activism challenges entrenched patriarchal structures. However, despite their critical exploration of the role of women in the eco-activist struggle in the novel their gender approach prioritises female contributions without sufficiently examining both male and female roles the resistance movement. By focusing on women as primary agents of change, their argument offers a one-sided assessment of gender roles, making such reading to lack impartial account of collective struggle. Consequently, the absence of a comparative gender framework constitutes a significant scholarly limitation.

Ecocritical and Cultural Readings of the Forest

On the ecocritical and cultural readings of the forest, Ben Okri's *Every Leaf a Hallelujah* holds a robust critical reception that largely converges on the ecological and cultural symbolism of the forest. Guignery, Vanessa argues that "in colonial and Africanist discourses, the forest is the most prominent insignia of Africanness in modernism" (3). The African forest is more than a natural resource. It holds cultural and tradition relevance, generally regarded as a sacred, living entity, intertwined with spiritual, ancestral, and communal life. Conversely, the colonial and capitalist invasion turned this cultural symbol into a site for the abusive extraction of natural resources. Reacting to destruction of the African forest, Akingbe argues that Ben Okri portrays this capitalist and industrialised goals of Western companies as his novel depicts the failure

of human beings to speak against the indiscriminate cutting down of trees (81). Akingbe advances the discussion by interpreting the novel as a critique of deforestation driven by capitalist and industrial forces, emphasising its ecological urgency (Akingbe 81). Similarly, Afolayan and Oladeji argue that the narrative chronicles the spiritual and cosmological bearings of the forest, evoking the need for mutual relationship between humans and nature (83). Madete and Omondi further extend this argument by asserting that the novel intertwines ecological concerns with religious and cultural ideologies, thereby demonstrating the inseparability of environmental and identity-based issues (Madete and Omondi 46).

Although these studies collectively underscore the ecological and cultural significance of the forest, they operate in isolation rather than in unison. There is little attempt to synthesise ecological, spiritual, and postcolonial perspectives into a unified analytical framework. Moreover, they emphasise more on the symbolic interpretation which overshadows the realities of environmental degradation depicted in the novel.

Magical Realism, Ecofeminism, and Activist Consciousness

In terms of magical realism and ecofeminism, Akingbe offers a scholarly examination of novel arguing that the combines magical realism with Afrofuturist and ecofeminist elements, creating a narrative space where ecological resistance is both imaginative and political (Akingbe 76). This critical perspective examines Okri's deployment of magical realism and its intersection with ecological and feminist concerns. This reading is particularly valuable in demonstrating how literary form itself functions as a mode of environmental critique. However, while ecofeminist readings gesture towards gendered dimensions of ecological struggle, Akingbe work failed to present a sufficient and detailed character analysis. Mangoshi's activism, for instance, is often treated as emblematic of environmental consciousness, yet the broader gender dynamics within the narrative are not rigorously interrogated. As a result, the intersection between ecological activism and

gender relations remains underexplored.

From the foregoing, it is evident that existing scholarship on both Mbue's and Okri's novels provides important insights into postcolonial ecocriticism, environmental degradation, and cultural identity. However, there is a persistent gap in the analysis of gender relations within ecological resistance, particularly regarding the interplay between male and female roles. This study addresses these limitations by advancing an integrated analytical framework that synthesises postcolonial ecocriticism with gender analysis. By explicitly linking structural forces such as capitalism and coloniality with gendered forms of resistance, the study moves beyond fragmented readings to offer a more comprehensive interpretation of environmental struggle. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations by foregrounding both the systemic roots of ecological crisis and the collective, gendered dynamics of resistance within these texts.

Analysis

A critical examination of how women and men interact with nature exposes contradictions that emanate from cultural, political and economic trends. This inspires numerous gendered eco-activist literary narratives. *How Beautiful We Were* and *Every Leaf a Hallelujah*, fall within the category of such literary texts. Their compelling analysis using a comparative method here provides a fertile ground for a more nuanced ecofeminist and postcolonial ecocritical intersection. Even though both texts focus on environmental degradation and resistance, instead of simply presenting male complicity and female sustained activism, they offer a complex representation of agency, responsibility, and vulnerability along gender lines. This analysis introduces new perspectives on examining gender representation in the selected novels.

Gendered Activism: Voices, Agency and Eco-activism in *How Beautiful We Were* and *Every Leaf A Hallelujah*

Even though environmental degradation of Kosawa caused by extractive activities of Pexton forms the major preoccupation of *How Beautiful We Were*, other troubling issues ensued

from the build-up of the narrative. Amongst them is the sustained struggle for ecological justice where gender remains a key factor. An in-depth reading of the text shows that the novel presents a nuanced case of gender activism against Pexton's exploitation. While both men and women play key roles in the novel, the novel also positions activism within broader socio-political constraints that shape both male and female responses as women emerge as more sustained, organised, and effective environmental activists. Thula's strategic eco-activist approach justifies a form of eco-activism grounded in education, political consciousness, and collective mobilisation. First, she conceives the idea to pursue education, viewing it as a weapon of eco-activism. She reflects: "I promised myself after the massacre that I would acquire knowledge and turn it into a machete that would destroy all those who treat us like vermin" (Mbue 99). Her decision signals not just personal vengeance but a strategic reorientation towards systemic change. Her reassurance to Yaya: "when I come back, I'll do everything to make sure Kosawa is back to the way it was in your childhood" (Mbue 104), additionally positions her ecological resistance as both restorative and progressive. Upon her return from studies where she learnt about organising movement for resistance, she contemplates using it to remove the incumbent government: "...what if we started a movement to bring down His Excellency's government? What if we were to send a message to Bézam that we won't take it anymore?" (Mbue 125). This sets the stage for Thula's nationwide resistance movement as she travels tirelessly, inspiring youth: "She still travelled the country to speak to occasional gatherings of her supporters, the young people who walked with high shoulders... and greeted each other by raising clenched fists" (146). Thula's movement metamorphoses into a political group as "she formed a political party to pressure His Excellency into holding an election, the first presidential election in our country's history. She named her party the United Democratic Party" (Mbue 144). This organised resistance and eventual formation of a political party underscore the intersection between grassroots activism and formal political

engagement.

Additionally, Thula's activism aligns with ecofeminist ideology, demonstrating that women are not passive victims of environmental degradation but architects of resistance that have the potential to challenge and transform power structures. Her eco-activist role contests patriarchal gender norms about leadership, as many men doubt her as a woman to lead effectively. On the contrary, her female gender takes pride in her: "Whenever she arrived somewhere, women welcomed her with joyful dancing. Look at what one of us is doing, they sang. Look at what a woman can do." (Mbue 146). This reception reflects how marginalised groups, including women, often recognise and amplify emergent forms of agency that challenge entrenched hierarchies. Thula, in this novel, embodies the future, hope and survival of women in the patriarchal and capitalist world. Through Thula's activism, the novel demonstrates how women are capable of moving into public political roles, redefining masculinity and femininity in the face of environmental crisis.

Apart from Thula, Yaya embodies ecological consciousness rooted in generational caretaking. Alongside Sahel, they take the role of caregivers. Their roles in water collection, food provision, and family care are not merely passive extensions of patriarchal expectations; instead, the environmental crisis exposes the fragility of these roles and the disproportionate burdens placed upon them. The contamination of water sources, degradation of land, and pollution of air results in women's inability to fulfil socially assigned roles, putting pressure on them for failing to feed and protect their children, revealing how ecological degradation intensifies existing social inequities.

On the male side, unlike female characters who demonstrate sustained organisational commitment to environmental justice, male characters are complicit in the struggle, as their responses are compromised by greed, corruption, and individualism. His Excellency, whose dictatorship facilitates Pexton's operations, is highlighted by the judge handling the case of the Kosawa people against Pexton who declares that "Pexton and our government had colluded to

commit countless crimes” (Mbue 155). This scenario foregrounds the entanglement of local and global power structures. At the core of *How Beautiful We Were*, Imbolo Mbue critiques the pervasive corruption that facilitates the neocolonial agenda, enabling the continued influence of colonialism and capitalism on former colonies.

The village leader, Wajo Beki, who is the and supposed to lead the struggle, turns out to represent dishonesty and greed. The narrative testifies that: “Even the smallest child in Kosawa knows that a truthful word never escapes Wajo Beki’s mouth; if he says good morning to you, you go outside and see if the sun is indeed out before you respond” (Mbue 18). The villagers describe how he has been benefitting from corporate bribes at their detriment: “ We’d seen with our own eyes and heard with our own ears how Pexton was fattening his wives and giving his sons jobs in the capital and handing him envelopes of cash” (Mbue 2). Through bribes offered to Wajo Beki, the novel exposes how colonial powers undermine communal cohesion by introducing Western individualism. The depiction of Wajo Beki, as one who trades his conscience for personal gain, illustrates how colonial-capitalist systems create neocolonial puppets who prioritise personal gain over communal welfare. Wajo Beki and His Excellency’s representation underscores cultural imperialism, revealing a deliberate Western effort to erase African indigenous communal culture, an ideology critiqued by postcolonial ecocriticism.

In *Every Leaf a Hallelujah*, Ben Okri builds the narrative on the young female protagonist, Mangoshi, whose forest adventure intertwines personal, communal, and ecological restoration. The plot development of the novel explores gender relations in the fight against deforestation, illustrating how both genders participate in the fight to save the forest. Through the heroine, Mangoshi, women are depicted as people who share a close relationship with nature. Her father’s assertion that “only a girl of seven years old can find this flower (Okri 32) appears at first to essentialise a feminine bond with nature. Yet, within the symbolic sense of the narrative, this recognition creates a narrative strategy that

repositions authority and capability in unexpected ways. Through the task assigned to Mangoshi, the novel challenges the patriarchal norm of describing bravery and leadership as male qualities. It upholds ecofeminist doctrines by demonstrating Mangoshi's success where the male authority figures fail, suggesting how women are able to take up leadership roles and carry out cultural, social and spiritual tasks effectively.

Mangoshi's sustained activist role is evident in her repeated journey into the forest, where she confronts the horrors of deforestation. Seeing nature destroyed so brutally provokes her emotional response: “Take me away from this place,' she said. This is too sad” (Okri 64). Mangoshi’s reaction underscores a compassionate mode of ecological awareness. The personified voices of the trees: “We are not just trees; we hold the earth together.” (Okri 57) extend the narrative beyond human-centred concerns, situating environmental degradation within a broader cosmological framework.

Considering her aim to save her mother, the forest and her entire village, Mangoshi fearlessly protests against the tree cutters, declaring, “This tree is my friend... You are not going to kill my friend” (Okri 75). In a bid to quench Mangoshi’s firm resistance, “The manager offered the girl money, but she would not take any. (Okri 79). Mangoshi's refusal to take a bribe foregrounds ethical conviction rather than gendered opposition. Her defiant protest calls the attention of children, parents, journalists, and the governor, who orders the suspension of the cutting down of trees: “Now we want you to stop,” the governor said. The people are protesting about the forest. Stop all work for now” (Okri 88). This indicates that environmental resistance ultimately exceeds individual or gendered action, becoming a communal endeavour. Mangoshi's resistance and bravery, which the story compares to “something no one had done for a very long time” (Okri 93), show her heroism, a trait usually thought of as non-feminine in a male-dominated world. Through Mangoshi’s forest adventure, the novel highlights the ecofeminist philosophy, which views women’s emancipation and environmental conservation as an intertwined project.

Besides Mangoshi, her mother, though physically inactive from direct activism due to ill health, plays a key role in the narrative's ecological consciousness. Her condition represents women as victims of environmental degradation, while her storytelling transmits cultural memory and environmental ethics. This intergenerational dynamic reinforces the idea that eco-activism operates across visible and invisible forms of participation. On the side of the trees, personified with human qualities, the trees in the novel symbolise women's vulnerability and wisdom, and ally with the female protagonist to confront the male corporate forces bent on their destruction and silencing.

A stark contrast to Mangoshi's sustained resistant role in the eco-activist struggle is the representation of the Manager of the timber and construction industry. The novel depicts the Manager as a symbol of destructive capitalism and environmental exploitation. In the interface with Mangoshi, the Manager introduces himself, revealing the reasons for his cutting down of trees: "I'm the Manager. We build houses with them and furniture, and with some trees we make books" (Okri 75). His statement glaringly captures the capitalist-acclaimed concept of development, which exploits nature for the benefit of a few and at the detriment of the masses, particularly women and children. By positioning the Manager against the eco-activist struggle, the novel challenges the patriarchal detachment or complicity in environmental harm and also subscribes to the postcolonial ecocritical debate.

Findings and Discussion

A comparative reading of Mbue's and Okri's novels reveals that both texts share lines of convergences and divergences in their portrayal of gendered eco-activism. While Mbue's narrative employs a blatant political and confrontational method in foregrounding systemic human and environmental injustice, state corruption, and collective resistance, Okri's work, by contrast, adopts a symbolic and spiritual representation that emphasises harmony, interconnectedness, and moral awakening. Their areas of divergence extend to narrative style. The multiple-voiced narrative pattern used in *How Beautiful We Were*

captures the slow violence of environmental degradation. *Every Leaf a Hallelujah's* child narrative voice, on the other hand, blends allegorical engagement with ecological crisis. Significantly, both texts also reveal a nuanced gendered representation in eco-activist struggles, positioning women in leadership roles in environmental struggles, without uniformly depicting men as antagonistic. By doing so, the novels map a spectrum of male participation, shaped by historical, political, and cultural forces, evident in Thula's five male friends, Mangoshi's father and other male characters who support the struggles but lack the capacity to drive change. Such reading aligns with postcolonial ecocritical concerns and also enhances the analytical depth of gendered eco-activism by foregrounding complexity, contradiction, and context.

This study finds that women are portrayed as committed and effective in community-oriented eco-activism. This upholds the ecofeminist proposition that women's social roles facilitate women's closer connection with nature. The study still finds that the depiction of male characters as complicit in environmental degradation mirrors the consequences of patriarchal power in a developing economy. These arguments suggest that ecological crises are rooted in patriarchy and capitalism. Lastly, the differences between the political confrontational activism in *How Beautiful We Were* and *Every Leaf a Hallelujah's* spiritually-weaved narrative unravel the multiplicity of eco-activist strategies within African literature. These texts jointly prove that environmental resistance can take both material and symbolic forms.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated how gender plays a critical role in shaping eco-activist narratives. The comparative study of the selected novels portrays that women are positioned as primary agents of environmental resistance, while male characters are associated with systems of exploitation. By harmonising ecofeminist and postcolonial ecocritical ideas, the study offers a deeper understanding of the intersection between gender, power, and environmental justice. It concludes that addressing environmental crises

requires not only ecological solutions but also a restructuring of gender and power relations. Ultimately, the study advances the ongoing

scholarly debates that advocate gender-sensitivity in environmental governance.

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