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A Social Ecological Reading of Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow*

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I. INTRODUCTION

This is a postcolonial ecological study of Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow* which retells the story of a teenage girl, Zilayefa and her Niger Delta community. The novel mirrors the unbearable level of environmental devastation that threatens to consume the entire Niger Delta region. According to G. G. Darah (2011), geographically, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria refers to the areas that borders the Atlantic seaboard and stretches from Cross River State near Cameroon in the east to the western boundary of Delta and Edo States. The River Niger and other major 21 rivers that flow into the Atlantic Ocean define the area. About half of the territory is permanently submerged in water for most part of the year. Politically, the Niger Delta has recently been enlarged to include all the nine oil-producing states in Nigeria. The states are: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers (pp. 3-4). In this light, this study will investigate the exploitation of humans in the region by the multinational oil exploration companies with the aid of government forces and above all, using Murray Bookchin's theory of social ecology, it will further assess how the exploitation of humans results in or encourages or is responsible for the exploitation of the non-human members of the environment. The study shall also review studies on Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow* in order to establish the gap which this study aims at bridging.

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II. POSTCOLONIAL ECOCRITICISM

Postcolonial ecocriticism came to be due to the need for colonised peoples all over the world to express their unique environmental concerns. It is a literary theory that concerns itself with humans and their relationships with the environment. Simply put, Postcolonial Ecocriticism includes all environmental literary and critical productions that emanates from colonised peoples of the world. Literature no doubt reflects society, therefore it represents societies along with their environmental situations and attributes. Postcolonial ecocriticism is interested in the environmental challenges of colonized peoples in the world over. Citing Gilano and DeLoughrey, Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2015) maintain that:

What the postcolonial ecocritical alliance brings out, above all, is the need for a broadly materialistic understanding of the changing relationship between people, animal and environment – one that requires attention, in turn to the cultural politics of representation as well as to those specific 'process of mediation [...] that can be recuperated for anti colonial critique' (p. 12).

Huggan and Tiffin (2015) relate environmental issues to racism and imperialism, where the perceived inferior races must be exploited just like nature. They opine that environmental issues are inherent in the ideas of imperialism and racism and the Eurocentric perception of these ideas are used as a justification for continues exploitation of different races just like nature (p. 6). Postcolonial ecocriticism is open to multiple voices and perspectives and is not limited to a single methodology or approach. This multiplicity of voices has no doubt opened up for diversified cultural, economic, geographical, regional and social environmental ethics that is aimed at ameliorating all environmental crises. Owing to the multiplicity of voices that is prevalent in postcolonial ecocriticism, this study shall employ Murray Bookchin's (2006) social ecological theory in assessing the environmental challenges of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, paying particular attention to how the exploitation of humans is the basis for the exploitation of non-humans as depicted in Kaine Agary's (2006) *Yellow Yellow*.

III. SOCIAL ECOLOGY

Social ecology is an economic environmental theory that seeks to proffer solutions that will resolve

existing contradictions between production and ecology. Social ecology draws heavily on Marx and Engels' critique of capitalism, approaches to ecology and society. The theory is rooted in the balance of nature, process, diversity, spontaneity, freedom and wholeness (Merchant, *Radical Ecology*, p. 148). Social ecology is premised on re-harmonizing the relationship between society and nature, as well as to create a rational ecological society (Bookchin, *Social Ecology and Communalism* p. 11-12).

As espoused in *Social Ecology and Communalism*, Murray Bookchin's ideas of social ecology are based on his convictions that most of the ecological problems facing humanity today emanates from social problems. Therefore, for him, our ecological crisis cannot be comprehended or resolved except we understand the societies and the inequalities that pervade it. To further buttress his point, he notes that "economic, ethnic, cultural, and gender conflicts" and many others are at the base of many of our ecological problems aside those caused by natural disasters (p. 19). Bookchin (2006) calls on environmentalists who think his ideas are too sociological to think again. This is because most environmental pollutions and hazards like oil spill, deforestation, and hydroelectric projects in places where people dwell are majorly socially and economically motivated (p. 19).

He asserts that ecological problems are inseparable from social problem and that trying to separate them will only amount to misunderstanding the sources of the persistent environmental crisis world over. In fact, for him, the relationship amongst human beings is reflective of how humans relate to the environment. And unless this is recognized, we will disregard the hierarchical mentality and class relations permeating the society as what is responsible for the domination of the natural world by humans (p. 20). I shall consider briefly the crux of some of the concepts of social ecology for the analysis of our primary texts here. Some of the concepts are:

a) *Nature and Society*

Murray Bookchin (2006) sees nature as dialectical and not instrumental. Nature for him is developmental. He observes that nonhuman nature is not just a scenic view but an unfolding and evolving phenomenon, in constant flux. Nature for him, therefore,

encompasses the development from the inorganic into the organic, and from the less differentiated and relatively limited world of unicellular organisms into that of multicellular ones equipped with simple, then, complex, and in time fairly intelligent neural apparatuses that allow them to make innovative choices. (p. 23)

Bookchin perceives humans as a product of evolution and as such, a by-product of evolutionary process. For him, humans are a product of long, natural evolutionary process and therefore a part of nature,

notwithstanding their large brain cells, advancement in technology, language and science. These advancements and creations of humans are what have culminated into a highly mutable class societies. These creations which are outside the natural processes are what Bookchin calls second nature and are creations of first nature. He avers that the alteration of nature and the creation of second (social) nature by humans are all responsible for most of our ecological crisis.

b) *Social Hierarchy and Domination*

Here, Bookchin elucidates further that social nature emerged from biological nature. He avers that as biological facts such as kin lineage, gender distinctions, and age differences were slowly institutionalized, their social dimension were initially egalitarian. It latter developed into a hierarchical, and invariably an exploitative class dimension. As time went by, humanity gradually began to disengage its social organization from the biological facts of blood ties, and began to admit "stranger" thereby opening up for a shared community of human beings rather than a group of kinsmen ("What is Social Ecology" pp. 31-32).

In the same manner, many other biological traits were reworked from a natural to social one, and with time, they were also reworked from a social institution to a hierarchical structure of domination that gave rise to structures like gerontocracy and patricentricity, which dominated not just the earth, but also women and other classes of men (pp. 33-35). For Bookchin, hierarchy is an institutionalized relationships created by privileged men to dominated the less privileged.

c) *The Idea of Dominating Nature*

The idea of dominating nature has its roots in the domination of human by human and in the hierarchical structuring of nature into chain of beings. Also, the biblical injunction that gave Adam and Noah a command to dominate the world was an expression of a social dispensation ("What is Social Ecology" pp. 38-39). This idea of dominating nature can only be overcome by creating a society that is void of hierarchical structures and class subjugations. Bookchin avers also that the future of human lives go hand in hand with the future of non-human lives.

d) *Past Studies on Yellow Yellow*

In an article entitled "The Displaced Male-image in Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow*" Ignatius Chukwumah (2013) prioritizes the psychological effects of the presence or absence of a male figure in the life of the central character, Zilayefa. He projects his psychoanalytic studies using Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung's theories while examining the anxieties that come with the presence and absence of a male-image in the characters lives. Chukwumah investigates what he calls the displaced male-image as displayed by most of the male characters in the novel and how their actions

affected and shaped the life of Zilayefa. He also examines how the displaced male-image in her life shaped her sexual life, as well as the impact of a displaced father figure in her life, the anxieties that come with such absence, and how Zilayefa manages to suppress them. In a broader sense, the study takes into account the roles played by male characters in shaping the life of Zilayefa. He analyzes characters like Papadopoulos, Zilayefa's runaway father, the Ijaw oil-smuggling boys, General Sani Abacha, Admiral, the management of the oil companies, Uthman Kamal, TT and many others, who have contributed in many dimensions in the composition of this displaced male-image (p. 49). Chukwumah employs Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* to analyse the male-image as a displaced entity, as well as other desires of humans which Jung refers to as collective unconscious (p. 50). He, however, concludes after his analyses of various characters in *Yellow Yellow* that the image of the male characters projected in the novel bears the mark of the important literary epoch Emenyeonu referred to as the "new voices" of the twenty-first century Nigerian literature. He also notes that the novel significantly undermines the depiction of most of the peculiar environmental problems of the region. He equally blames Zilayefa for most of the woes that befall her, though he does not completely exonerate the displaced male-images in her life (p. 61).

Similarly, Nwangwu, Julia Chidinma and Ibiene E. Iboroma (2018) lend their voices in the interpretation of Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow* from a psychological perspective. They inquire into the Psychological effects of single parenthood on the children. The study draws from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis and Walter Wreckless' control theory in order to understand the effect of single parenthood on the emotional and social behaviour of children within the family unit (p. 23). To achieve this goal, the study compares characters in *Yellow Yellow* and those in *Everything Good Will Come* and draw conclusions that despite the presence of a father or a mother in a single parent family, the characters still lack the filial love they deserve and this has a way of affecting them psychologically just like the way the social setting they find themselves in do (p. 32).

In a related note, Kayode Omoniyi Ogunfolabi (2019) concerns himself with the pain, trauma, and discrimination suffered by Zilayefa and other mulattoes (Yellows) like her in the novel due to their mixed race. In an article entitled "Biracialism and Trauma in Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow*", Ogunfolabi reveals the travels of biracial women in an African society and maintains that as a product of biracial relationships, these women have blurred the racial boundaries and consequently emerges as "the other." And from his analysis of the text, Ogunfolabi shows that the dialectics of visibility and invisibility produces traumatic experiences on the part of

the protagonist. The trauma suffered by the protagonist is also not unrelated to the courage of the writer to rewrite racial exclusivity by privileging a biracial female character (p. 38). The first part of the essay addresses the valorization of racial purity on one hand, and on the other, the vilification of biracial identities through the narratives of Madam George or Sisi. Sisi narrates how she was rejected as a potential daughter-in-law because of her 'unknown' lineage. Here, her unknown lineage simply alludes to her racial mixture. By this narration, Zilayefa realises that she, Sisi and other biracial women in her society does not fit into the racial codes of their society and are therefore relegated to the margins as others since they are perceived by the larger society as morally weak and sexually promiscuous (p. 41). Valorizing women of mixed race on the other hand, signify physical attraction, and it most often leave them as victims of sexual abuses. This is typical of Sisi, Emem, and Zilayefa's lives (p. 42). The second part of the article anchors the analysis of the novel on Cathy Caruth's idea of trauma to establish that the protagonist is a victim of trauma. Zilayefa is often traumatised whenever she looks at her mother. This is because of the fact that she is a complete replica of her mother, Ina Binaebi, and most strikingly because she had similar kind of experiences as her mother in the city of Port Harcourt. Her contact with Sergio reminds her of her father and the trauma that comes with not knowing her father because the man abandoned her mom and her even before she was born. She however tries to unconsciously suppress the feeling of her father's absence just like her mother who completely avoids talking about Plato, Zilayefa's father. Ogunfolabi asserts that it was Zilayefa's desire for fatherly love that draws her closer to Admiral even though it will cost her sexual exploitation (p. 42). Thirdly, the essay shows how the author uses the mulatto characters as a narrative agency to undermine racial purity and supremacy as well as alleviating the suffering or traumatic effect of the 'other' (p. 39). The author requites narrative agency to the mixed race characters in order for them to tell their own stories as it affects them, thereby giving them prominence which had hitherto been denied by social discriminations of all sorts against them.

Unlike Chukwumah and Ogunfolabi, Olubunmi Ashaolu (2019) articulates her ecofeminist perspectives of the novel more poignantly. She acknowledges the bond and relationship that exists between women and nature as well as the role of women in terms of protecting nature which were born out of the collective oppression, abuse and subjugation of women and nature. The article interrogates the negative effects of male biased power over women and nature, and how the logic of domination amounts to environmental degradation. She explicates this claim by alluding to the destruction of Zilayefa's mother's (Bibi) farm by oil spill which is as a result of the activities of human

represented by the multinational on African women as well as the land (nature). She argues that Bibi suffers the consequence of that spill economically, just as much as it renders the land (nature) unproductive. It is in this regard that they are co-victims of patriarchal oppression (p. 44). Secondly, it mimics the persistence of the exploitation of African land and her women to the advantage of the West and African patriarchal capitalists. Bibi's refusal to join other women in reporting the incident of oil spill to the Amananaowei, the community leader, signifies her loss of confidence in the patriarchal traditional institution, and as such sees the patriarchal leader as an accomplice and collaborator in the joint exploitation of nature and African women (p. 44). Ashaola concludes by highlighting not just the complimentary relationship between African women and nature, but the symbiotic synergy between them and the non-human other.

In like manner, Ngozi Chuma-Udeh (2014) explores the novel purely from a feminist perspective. She takes a cursory look at the rights of women as a mark of sustainable development as projected by female writers (p. 4). She decries the commodification of women as objects to be bought by the highest bidder in the novel. Chuma-Udeh notes that the subjugation of women as objects of sexual gratification is made possible due to unequal employment opportunity with their male counterpart. She also laments the indiscriminate manner in which foreign oil workers impregnate and abandon local naive girls that mostly produce yellow children like Zilayefa with no paternal care and love (p. 22). Consequently, most of the girls end up as school drop-outs, and eventually turns to prostitution as a means of survival in a very harsh society that cares nothing about them. Chuma-Udeh therefore calls on government and society to include women in development plans of the society in order to achieve a sustainable development. Most importantly, for her, women should be educated since it is a gateway for their emancipation (p. 23).

In another gender based study, Koussouhon, Leonard A. and Ashani M. Dossoumou (2015) explore the oppression of women by some male agents in the society. In their article "Analyzing Interpersonal Metafunction through Mood and Modality in Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow* from Critical Discourse and Womanist Perspectives", Koussouhon and Dossoumou blend linguistic theory (Critical Discourse Theory) and literary theory (Womanism) in analysing the speeches of characters to determine how much they support or oppress women, and how the women survive in the novel. The article's focus is on the analysis of an extract from the novel. It analyzes the novel by focusing on the interpersonal metafunction through mood and modality, and blending it with the womanist perspectives in order to arrive at a conclusion. They conclude that the novel rejects any form of oppression against women. And that

the women in the novel are communitarians because the women community work hands in gloves to ensure that young girls in their community succeed both academically and in the society at large which is a core principle of womanism (p. 31). Consequently, they argue that Agary's novel is geared towards a pro-women social change for a more balanced African society. The outlook of the article is in its perception different from the present study in that it is a linguistic womanist study as against the postcolonial environmental perception of the current study.

In a purely linguistic study, Robert Esther and Ekemini Sunday Umoekah (2019) examine the linguistic style of Kaine Agary in *Yello Yellow* so as to effectively interpret the text. Using M.A.K. Halliday's systemic functional linguistics and linguistic stylistics as the theoretical basis, they appraise the major lexical, lexico-semantics, grammatical and graphological features of the text. After the appraisal, it was discovered that the texts uses mainly concrete nouns, active and dynamic verbs, first person-pronoun "I", co-ordinates and simple sentences, semi-colon and exclamation marks as its peculiar linguistic features which marks its style as feminine. The text also uses neologisms, sexist tropes, parallel clause structures Nigerianisms and pidgin to beautify and contextualise the discourse. The aim of this approach is to show how Agary's use of language (style) is distinct from other writers (pp. 58-59). The systematic analysis of *Yellow Yellow* shows a regular pattern of representations of issues like oil pollution, female exploitation, identity crisis, and socio-political crises in the Niger Delta (p. 67). It can be deduced that from the linguistic stylistic reading of the text, the writer thematically captures the nation's ills and the stylistic development of language and theory appropriately (p. 67). This study being a purely linguistic study of *Yellow Yellow*, is very distinct from the present study which majorly a postcolonial environmental one.

On the other hand, Chukwueloka, Christian Chukwuloo (2017) takes a look at the society reflected in the novel from a Marxist perspective. In an article titled "Exploitation, Hardship, and Corruption as Impediments to Development in the Niger Delta: A Study of Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow*", Chukwueloka vilifies the bourgeois and their foreign partners for exploiting the society which accounts for the hardship suffered by the poor people, as well as perpetuating corrupt practices that impedes development. He avers that the people of the Niger Delta are exploited economically, sexually, physically and emotionally. For him, this exploitation in a way or the other retards growth and development of the people and the society (p. 2). To buttress his argument, Chukwueloka recounts Zilayefa's experiences of sexual exploitation in the hands of Sergio and Admiral and the exploitation of the Niger Delta people and their land by the bourgeoisie and the multinational oil companies (pp. 2-8). He also laments over the untold hardship suffered

by the people due to oil spillage, neglect by government and multinationals. The oil spill in Zilayefa's village consequently aborted lots of dreams and aspirations and also amounted to poverty on the part of the Niger Deltans. For them, the only escape from poverty and hardship is for the girls to resort to prostitution while the boys drop out of schools to join the notorious militant groups in getting their share of the "national cake" (pp. 8-12). Exploitation and hardship are not just the courses of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta, but corruption as well. Chukwueloka argues that corruption has contributed a great deal to the stagnation of the area. He points at the police, the judicial system, the political class and the oil companies as the major perpetrators of corrupt practices which stagnates and retards development in the Niger Delta and Nigeria at large (pp. 12-15). Chukwueloka's study of the novel is different from the present study because, it is motivated by the Marxist ideology. Though the present study is a study in environmentalism, especially one that has its roots in Marxism, it is still different from Chukwueloka's study which basis of analysis centres on traditional Marxist tenets.

Uchenna Ohagwam concerns himself with finding answers to some of the enduring questions in the Niger Delta since the discovery of oil in its commercial quantity in the area. Some of the questions include: to what extent has the discovery of oil affected or improved the socio-economic development of the people and the area? Why do crises persist in the area? He strives to find answers to these questions with *Yellow Yellow* by employing postcolonial ecocritical theory. In the article titled "The Niger Delta Crises in the Niger Delta Novel: Reflections on Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow*", Ohagwam undertakes an assessment of the crises in the area as occasioned by oil exploration. He identifies several crises that bedevils the area but however concentrates on environmental despoliation, youth restiveness, betrayal and infrastructural neglect as the major ones that deter developments in the area (p. 11). He buttresses his arguments by citing instances from *Yellow Yellow*. He concludes that these crises have persisted due to neglect and betrayal on the part of leaders and has amounted to several violent ills perpetrated by youths of the region either to protect their environment which they have lost hope in government or leaders, or for their personal gains. The study therefore advocates for dialogue and peaceful resolution of the crises for the preservation and sustenance of human and non-human lives in the environment (p. 16). Uchenna Ohagwam undertakes a very critical look at the environmental crisis of the Niger Delta area in the larger body of postcolonial ecocriticism. However, his study differs in that he explores the general effect of environmental pollution on the people of the area. On the contrary, my study is mainly concerned with the negative effect of environmental pollution on the

subaltern none-humans, as well as advocating for environmental justice for the non-human subaltern.

Having reviewed all the accessible studies on Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow*, it is apparent that none of the studies reviewed considered the novel from a social ecological perspective as propagated by Murray Bookchin. Ignatius Chukwumah; Nwangwu, Julia Chidinma and Ibiene E. Iboroma concentrates on the psychological effects of single parenting on the child, while Kayode Omoniyi Ogunfolabi in a similar note feel obliged to explore the trauma that comes with being a product of mixed racial parentage. Olubunmi Ashaolu finds solace in linking women's exploitation to that of nature in an ecofeminist study. Ngozi Chuma-Udeh delves into a feminist study of *Yellow Yellow* just like Koussouhon, Leonard A. and Ashani M. Dossoumou who combines womanism and critical discourse theory in order to find a balance for the female characters in *Yellow Yellow*. Robert Esther and Ekemini Sunday Umoekeh's study is purely a linguistic study of the novel which is aimed at revealing hidden codes in the novel. While that of Chukwueloka, Christian C. is a Marxist study aimed at exposing the exploitation of some characters by others in a capitalist society. And lastly Uchenna Ohagwam's study of the text is a postcolonial ecocritical one which is more concern with the social issues and challenges that greeted the discovery and exploitation of petroleum products in Nigeria and how it affects the human agents in the novel. Therefore, these studies have revealed that attention has not in any way been paid to non-human species of the environment which is what this research is geared towards, also none of the studies advocate for environmental justice for non-humans using Bookchin's social ecology as theoretical outlook. Hence, these studies validate the relevance of my present study.

e) *Social Hierarchy and Domination in Kaine Agary's Yellow Yellow*

Kaine Agary's (2006) *Yellow Yellow* tells the story of a teenage girl, Zilayefa, who in her bid to find herself escapes from her rural community to the city of Port Harcourt in her quest for a better and more fulfilling life. In telling her story, the narrator reveals the devastating ecological challenges that threaten to extinct her rural community. *Yellow Yellow* presents a society that is highly structured along economic and social lines. A society that is structured along rural and urban, ethnic, racial, economic lines, bourgeoisie and proletariats, exploiters and exploited and rulers/kings and subjects which are all aimed at social relation anchored on exploitation. The social relation that exists in Agary's society is one of exploitation and these social relations are what we shall explore critically in this novel and also try to argue that these exploitative relations among humans are at the base of non-human exploitation and by extension responsible for most



ecological problems as envisaged by Bookchin. That is to say that, social problems are at the base of most ecological problems and that the relationship among humans is a reflection of how humans relate to non-humans.

In Agary's *Yellow Yellow*, several class relations exist and we shall analyse them one after the other. The Amananaowei is portrayed as the king of Zilayefa's village and he is expected to care for and protect his subjects – the people of the community. For Bookchin the institutionalization of any form of kingship in any society is an aberration, an enthronement of hierarchy, class difference and exploitative relation. Sadly, the Amananaowei's action confirms Bookchin's assertion. At the instance of the oil spill that destroys the farmland of the community,

A group of people, painted in the same black as my mother, some covered from head to toe, was marching to see the Amananaowei, the head of the village. I joined them to find out what had happened. It turned out some of them had also lost their farmland that day. They were marching to the Amananaowei's house to report the matter and demand that he take it up with the oil company. Some were crying; others were talking about compensation. (p. 4)

At this point of devastation, the people expects the Amananaowei to intervene on their behalf as they seek compensation from the oil company so as to start up their lives again as they are majorly farmers and fishermen and women. Unfortunately, the Amananaowei did not rise up to the occasion. Perhaps, he is in the payroll of the oil companies and will not make any move that may jeopardize his remuneration. Hence, he abandons his subjects at a time of economic crisis and left them all to their devastating fate. The people are left with no choice but to take their destinies in their own hands, "the community took the matter up with the oil company that owned the pipes, but they said they suspected sabotage by the youths and were not going to pay compensation for all destruction that the burst pipes had caused" (p. 4). The decision of the oil company is a clear indication of their resolve to continue to subdue the poor farmers because they are very much aware that the people cannot take any legal action against them because of their economic circumstance and it will cost less to bribe the Amananaowei and a few chiefs, notwithstanding the massive exploitation and devastation they wrought on the land and people. Zilayefa reinstates the suspicion when she notes that,

Young boys threatened to rough up the Amananaowei and his elders because rumours, probably true, had reached their ears that the Amananaowei and his elders had received monetary compensation, meant for the village, from the oil company and shared it amongst themselves. (p. 40)

Agary portrays Zilayefa and other teenage girls as objects and victims of sexual exploitation by adult males in anticipation of financial gains. A good number

of the male are foreign oil company workers or sailors who often get the teenage girls pregnant and abandon them with the unborn child. This is also the case of Bibi, Zilayefa's mother, a naïve eighteen-year-old, who was impregnated by a Greek sailor, Papadopolous, and disappears without traces, leaving behind his seed, Zilayefa, and her mother (p. 7). Zilayefa finds herself in a similar situation in her desperation to depart her village for the city. She comes in contact with Sergio at the age of seventeen and hopes that he is the messiah that will take her away from the village even if she has to pay with her virginity. However, the Spaniard disappears without any notification leaving her heartbroken though sexually unexploited and undefiled. About a year on, they accidentally meet in Port Harcourt and strike a sexual relation that eventually left her pregnant even though she is not sure of the paternity of the fetus because she is also having and unprotected sexual relation with another man, Admiral.

Agary did not miss out on other kinds of exploitations prevalent in her society especially as it concerns teenage girls. She notes that the poverty stricken girls are most times left with no choice but anything that presents itself that will take them out of their poverty infested life and family. They are willing to trade that for sex with men older than their fathers, while some others can afford to become house-helps for very exploitative masters, which is tantamount to slavery. As Zilayefa recounts the experiences of some of the girls who visit her village from the cities, she notes that:

Our visitors told of times when they fell into the hands of a crazy whitey who beat them up or pushed objects like bottles into their privates as part of the "fun." It seemed that, sometimes, there were so many unimaginable horrors to get through before the "clients" released the money. (p 38)

As a result of the poor economic conditions of the various families where these teenage girls come from, they are lured into prostitution. Their desperation to live a better life leaves them vulnerable to prostitution and with little options since they are majorly from poor homes, have no skill and little or no education in most cases. Zilayefa finds herself in such situation and contemplates her options on how to escape from her poverty infested village for the city. She weighs the option of eloping with Sergio to the city. And when that fails, she thinks to find anyone from her village that lives in the city and become a house-help to such a person. According to her, "I would help them with duties, such as cooking, cleaning, washing, going to the market, and taking care of children; in exchange, they would pay so I could learn a trade" (p. 38). However, she is not unaware of the problem that comes with such arrangements. She reminisces on the experiences of some of her acquaintances that had ventured into that and notes that "some children returned to the village with tales of how their mistresses would beat them daily, deny them food, and, after years of service, send them

back to the village without having improved their lives, as promised" (p. 38). After weighing this option in her mind, she opts out of it and thinks to learn a trade. She considers "Yet another option was to learn a trade – sewing, catering, or hairstyling – and start my own business" (p. 39). Unfortunately, her mother does not have the financial capacity to see her through that and she does not have the wherewithal as well. She finds herself on a crossroad where she is willing to do anything that will take her away from her village to the city. In her words, "I was open to all sorts of things. The only option I was unwilling to consider, that tormented my quiet moments the most, was to remain in my village" (p. 39). This reveals her desperation to leave her poverty stricken village and go elsewhere to the city to better her life and that of her mother.

The exploitation of teenage girls by foreign workers in the oil-rich Niger Delta region left the society with a lot of unwanted mixed-race children, especially girl children, who are perceived as illegitimate and promiscuous, owing to the circumstances of their birth. Zilayefa is one of such children. She is popularly known and called Yellow Yellow by everyone including her mother because of her complexion, "the product of a Greek father and an Ijaw mother" (p. 7). So also is Emem's mother. Like Zilayefa, she "was a product of a hit-and-run with a Portuguese trader" (p. 73), who must have met her mother at a tender age and exploited her vulnerability. In her quest for self-discovery, Zilayefa finds out that there are generations of yellows that dates back to 1800s in the Niger Delta and each of them has a unique story to tell about the circumstance of their birth and life. She reveals that the first generation yellows are from the Portuguese traders and the British colonialists which are the origins of old-time yellows such as Sisi. There are also the second generations of yellows from the Syrians, Lebanese and Greek businessmen and sailors, some of whom were lucky to know their fathers. The rest yellows were abandoned by their fathers. According to Zilayefa, "the rest of us were *born-troways*, rejected by our fathers or, worse, nonexistent to them. Our crop of yellows was full of variety, coloured by the Filipinos, the Chinese, the British, and the Americans who worked in the oils sector" (p. 74). In the city of Port Harcourt, Zilayefa discovers that she and other of her kinds that are of mixed race are regarded with disdain. She notes that

People had preconceived notions about others of mixed race – they thought we were conceited, promiscuous, undiscipline, and confused. A mixed-race woman in a position of power must have gotten there because of her looks. She was not there because she was intelligent. There was even much less regard for *born-troways* such as me. We were products of women of easy virtue who did not have morals to pass to their children. (p. 74)

This sort of discrimination and oppression often leave the yellows vulnerable and presents them as

subjects of exploitation to the exploitative society they find themselves in. Consequently, they often fall victims to the exploitative society and humans who are very aware that they lack paternal care and seizes the opportunity to exploit them. The military government is also culpable in the brutal oppression, exploitation, and silencing of the people of the region especially those who dare to speak out and up against the government. Zilayefa affirms that "all those who dared complain about the land's leader mysteriously disappeared... jailed, attacked, and killed by "armed robbers" or invited to meetings where they were served poisoned tea" (p. 99). Bookchin acknowledges that these kinds of exploitation and oppression of humans by humans is what gives momentum to the exploitation of non-humans and are inseparable from their exploitation of the environment and by extension, non-humans, and are therefore responsible for most of the ecological crisis we face today.

Fortunately for Madam George, she is one of the few yellows who grew up knowing and having their fathers around unlike Zilayefa. Her father is a Briton who worked for the British Empire in the region before independence, and her mother an Ijaw woman. She is popularly called Sisi. She is enterprising and business savvy, and ventured in it at an early stage of her life. She won and executed many contracts from the government and oil companies from where she made her fortune. She lives in affluence and also gifts boxes of cloths in abundance to her daughter and grandchildren who lives in America. Clara affirms

that Sisi had one child, a daughter who lived in America, who she spent most of her money on, along with her grandchildren; the rest went to keeping herself comfortable. At least twice a year, she sent a suitcase full of the latest laces, wrappers, and jewellery to her daughter" (p. 53).

Her life of affluence is a contrast to that of abject penury led by Bibi, Zilayefa's mother, who had to expel herself from the women's group because of her inability to pay for their uniform. After her resolve to exit the group, Bibi says to the chairlady "I no get money so I de return de cloth. I neva cut am" (p. 8). She openly declares that she does not have the money to pay for the cloth and the cloth is still intact, uncut, so the chairlady can have it back. By so doing, "she expelled herself from the women's group so that she would not be forced to spend money on wrappers for their outings" (p. 8). The contrast lives of abundance and penury the two women lead is synonymous to the class distinction and difference that Bookchin perceives as one the reasons for ecological crisis.

As a naïve, innocent girl trying to find her footing in the city of Port Harcourt, Zilayefa falls into the hands of Retired Admiral Kenneth Alaowei and her life did not remain the same. Popularly known as Admiral, Kenneth Alaowei is a sixty-year-old native Ijaw man. He retired early from the Nigeria Navy due to the unpredictable

military regime in the country. Admiral is able to amass wealth for himself during his service years and lives in affluence after retiring from the Nigeria Navy. He lives alone in his mansion with his butlers. He is a divorcee; the marriage with his ex-wife produced two kids, a boy and a girl, the ex-wife now lives in Spain with their kids, who are about the same age as Zilayefa. Admiral treats his children especially his daughter, Alaere, with so much love whenever they visit him in Nigeria. For Zilayefa, growing up without a father leaves her very desirous of such fatherly love and care she witnesses Admiral displays on his daughter, Alaere. In her quest and desire for fatherly care, Zilayefa is attracted to Admiral because she "saw him dote on his daughter" (p. 133) and so wishes to also get such affection from a father figure. Unfortunately for her, she is looking for the right thing at the wrong place. She ignores, and fails to learn from the facts of Admirals legendary sexual escapades with teenage girls. This is because she is "hoping that the relationship would give me a taste of close paternal affection that I had never had" (p. 138). At age seventeen, she starts a sexual relationship with Admiral though she is confused and unclear about what she wants. She reasons that "I had not even stopped to consider whether I liked Admiral or not, much less thought of having sex with him or having him caress my body" (p. 133). In her naïve and confused state, Admiral takes advantage of her like he did with other teenage girls, lavishes money and gifts on her, and exploits her a great deal.

The relationship is an unfair, unequal and unbalanced one owing to the wide gap in their age, economic, social background and status. It leaves Zilayefa at a disadvantaged position and susceptible to exploitation. Owing to this difference, Zilayefa cannot have any meaningful discussion with Admiral because she is always mindful of the age difference between them. She finds it very difficult to inquire from Admiral of those things that are of concern to her. According to her,

I could not ask him about his alleged girlfriends, or ask that he confirm or deny all the rumours about himself in the tabloids. Despite his familiarity, I could not bring myself to forget he was an elder... I would not even be allowed to look him in the eye because that will be disrespectful.... I couldn't say a lot of things for fear of being rude – or worse, insolent. (pp. 135-136)

Owing to Zilayefa's desire for paternal care and naivety, she fails to understand that she was heading for the slaughter even when Admiral tells her that he will exploit her. On the first night of their meeting, through a wide grin he says to her "You do look like you'd be sweet to bite, but I'll save that for another day" (p. 130). She does not understand what he mean by that because of her inexperience and she confirms that "seventeen years is not enough time to learn the things one needs to know in order to have any kind

of relationship with a sixty-year-old man" (p. 132). Eventually, she gives her virginity to him but she hopes to get a special place in Admiral's life. She ponders that "Admiral had taken my innocence, which I had given willingly and happily to him. I hope it gave me a special place in his heart" (p. 144). However, after having sex with him, she is surprise at herself for having an affair with a man that is way above her social class. She expresses it when she notes that:

I was in such awe of Admiral and was taken by the fact a man of his place in society wanted to be with me... I wanted to make him happy and hoped that in return I would experience the emotional comfort, attention, and protection that I had seen between him and Alaere. (p. 145)

After the first sexual encounter with Zilayefa, Admiral disappears for almost two weeks without informing her of his where about. Zilayefa got so worried because she cannot just go to his house without invitation. Hence, she affirms that the relationship is indeed an exploitative one devoid of concern for her when she says "I was torn and worried about the one-sidedness of the relationship" (p. 149). However, Admiral shows up after about two weeks and Zilayefa sulks about his disappearance and the fact that she cannot visit his home at will for fear of not gaining access through the security details. In order to pacify her, Admiral introduces her to his cook as "my small friend Laye" and to the security man at the gate as "this face" (p. 151). This implies that he does not regard her as anything other than one of his victims of sexual gratification. Due to her naivety, Zilayefa falls for his deceit and claims that he had introduced her as a special guest when he had just referred to her as "my small friend" and "this face" right in her presence.

Again, Admiral did not introduce Zilayefa to any of his friends or business associates whenever they converge in his house for their meetings because of her social status. As a result of this, she resorts to sneaking in and out of the house through the back door by the kitchen whenever there is such gathering at Admiral's home. According to her, "...when I arrive on such nights, I had to sneak into the house through the kitchen" (p. 151). As time goes by, Admiral becomes busier with his business and has little or no time to spend with her and consequently she feels empty because what she seeks from Admiral, "companionship and male affection" seems to be eluding her, and that is not unrelated to their class difference. It eventually downed on her that Admiral does not take her any serious when she discovers that she is pregnant. The callous side of Admiral becomes clear to her when he gave her money and instructed her to "go to Island Clinic and ask for Dr. George. Tell him you need a pregnant test, and if you are pregnant, he will help you get rid of it" (p. 162). She becomes heartbroken because she expects Admiral to marry and take her in since he has the means to take care of her and the

unborn baby. In her confused state, she realizes that Admiral only took advantage of her and affirms it when she says "I could not bear the shame of being seen as one of the poor little girls taken advantage of by her sugar daddy" (p. 163). Hence, she resolves to abort the pregnancy. She becomes disillusioned and laments that there are so many other teenage girls like her who face similar situations as hers on a daily basis. She avers that:

There were other people around me whose fathers were a mystery to them, just like mine was to me. Men who had strayed from their "happily" married lives and fathered some of them; men in high society who had no problem sleeping with their lower-class mothers but remembered their social status when they got someone pregnant. (p. 174)

Besides the exploitation of teenage girls, Agary also highlights the exploitation of the Niger Delta by the oil companies and the security agencies, as well as the crisis in the region that is fueled by claims of ethnic domination and oppression, which are some of the basic reasons for most of the ecological crisis today as perceived by Bookchin. The Ijaw and Itsekiri ethnic nations have been locked in battle for years over domination. The battles are mostly bloody as people from both sides lose their lives over claims of repelling ethnic dominance by the other ethnic group. There is no gainsaying that what fuels the crisis is majorly based on who controls the resources of the region, "who owned the land? Who were the tenants? Who deceived whom? In what year?" (p. 157). Based on these claims over the control of the region's natural resources, the two parties have continually locked horns in fierce battles for a very long time spanning over decades, and that leaves the region vulnerable as a war-prone region. Consequent upon these constant break-downs of order, the government deploys military personnel to the region in order to curtail the region's restiveness and also to enable increased production for the oil companies. Outside the line of their duty, the military men become instruments of oppression in the hands of the oil workers against those who dare to question the deplorable state of the communities. These are some of the issues that the Ijaw youth group brought to the attention of Admiral. In a meeting with Admiral,

They talked about how the oil companies were using the Nigerian armed forces as their private security details to terrorise and sometimes kill innocent villagers who question the inequality of their situation – living in squalor while barrels of oil pumped out of their land provided the luxury that surrounded the oil workers and the elite of Nigeria. (p. 158)

According to Bookchin, it is the unchallenged exploitation of humans by humans that provided the avenue to further brutally extend the exploitation to non-human members of the environment without recourse of any form. The fact that human exploitation is unchallenged gives room for a further brutal exploitation of non-humans. The fact that the capitalists of the

society exploit Bibi, Zilayefa and Emem freely and unchallenged give them the effrontery to exploit the environment as well. That is why the oil companies will pollute the land, water, air and in the process destroy and kill all the living beings within the environment and yet, feel unperturbed. That is why the oil spill in Zilayefa's community can spread out "covering more land and drowning small animals in its path" (p. 4) and also pollute the air as Zilayefa confirms that "it was strong – so strong it made my head hurt and turned my stomach" (p. 4). On the other hand, Sergio travels all over the world especially to rural communities like Zilayefa's in search of economic trees to cut down for commercial purposes not minding the negative effects of such action on the environment. He informs Zilayefa that "they were interested in logging timber from the forest" (p. 22) in her community and that is the reason he came. These brutal exploitation and destruction of non-human members of the environment is what Bookchin is interested in addressing and as such comes up with the belief that the brutal exploitation transcends beyond economic reasons but is deeply rooted in the social crisis that permeates all over the world.

IV. CONCLUSION

The organized and supervised unequal distribution of wealth is what is majorly responsible for the inequality that pervades the Nigerian society. It has been institutionalized and has continued to strengthen social and class difference in the country. These inequalities, exploitation, and class difference is what Murray Bookchin (2006) decries as the major causes of ecological crisis that plagues most of the world today. This is because for him, exploitation, inequality, class distinction and other forms of exploitative domination first started with and among humans before it was extended to non-humans. The exploitation of non-humans as represented in Kaine Agary's (2006) *Yellow Yellow* is an extension of the exploitation of humans and an expression of the capitalist zeal to subdue the earth. According to Bookchin, the exploitation of non-humans cannot stop unless there is an end to the exploitation of humans.

The critical reading of Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow* validates part of Bookchin's claims that our ecological crisis emanates from social crisis as espoused in *Social Ecology and Communalism*. In that regard, some of these social issues are highlighted here so as to ascertain how they are precursors to the exploitation of the ultimate subalterns – the non-human members of the ecology. The novel has a feminist undertone in that it highlights different facets of exploitations as it affects women, especially those of mixed race in the Niger Delta. It also tells of how some of them have managed to meander through all their

challenges and emerged victoriously. Nevertheless, we are able to point out the exploitation of humans by humans generally from the novel with the aim of establishing that such exploitation is what gives rise and legitimacy to the exploitation of non-humans by humans, and as such, is responsible for most of the ecological crisis we face in the world today as Bookchin envisages.

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