Environmental Justice in Diaspora Female Writing: An Ecofeminist Study of Imbue Imbolo's *How Beautiful We Were*

Katung John KWASU
Department of English and Literary Studies,
Ahmadu Bello University,
Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria.
kkatung@gmail.com

Abstract
This paper investigates the overwhelming silences and invisibility of women who played key roles in defining moments in African history by unsettling existing archives, reinserting, and re-invisibilizing these voices and figures. In Diaspora Female writing, there is a growing body of work that attempts to account for these erasures and absences of women in history, especially as it pertains to their role in enlightening and championing the cause of climate change and environmental justice. This paper adopts Ecofeminist discourse to demonstrate Women's conscious signification of environmental activism through fiction. The paper avers that female Diaspora Female writers resort to their native knowledge of the African continent to excavate narratives that privilege the role of women in traditional societies in safeguarding the environment. This is done through the enactment of female characterization situated within the context of African society.
Keywords: Ecofeminism, Environmental Justice, Diaspora, Female Writing, Climate Change

Introduction

Environment justice encompasses the efficient use and exploration of the natural environment, comprising of both plants and animals in a way and manner that is beneficial to mankind and also protects the environment from degradation, exploitation, and natural disasters. The issue of justice as it pertains to the utilization of the environment by man is sometimes gleamed from the angle of ethics and morality, especially from scholars of theology, religious studies and most recently musicology. The wide spread of this discourse gives credence to the centrality of safeguarding the natural environment from man-made disasters. In theology, Zaggi (2016) connects human relationality and the environment, emphasizing the relationship between the creation of the natural world and the narrative of the creation of humans. His work further alludes to the biblical narrative in Genesis, of how a supreme being created man and placed him in a garden, that has fruits. This garden symbolizes the natural environment. In the same light, Pope Francis alluding to Pope Benedict argues that:

> The world cannot be analyzed by isolating only one of its aspects, since the book of nature is one and indivisible, and includes the environment, life, sexuality, the family, social relations and so forth. It allows that the deterioration of nature is closely connected to the culture which shapes human coexistence.

From the foregoing arguments, it is explicitly apparent that human existence is debased without a sense of commitment to prudent, efficient and adequate protection of the environment to save it from destruction. It becomes a matter of disobeying God if man refuses to advocate for and practice environmental justice, in its exploitation and exploration of the environment.

Furthermore, in music, studies like Kinnear (2017) and Olaoluwa (2021) have appraised the link between music and the battle for environmental justice in the Niger Delta and buttressed the need for moderation, ethics and hygiene in the quest for oil exploration in the area.

This paper delves into the issue of environmental justice in literary studies how Diaspora Female Writers explicate this matter in their fictional narratives and the role women have played to promote ecological or environmental justice.

Theorizing the Poetics of Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism emerged and exists as a subset of Ecocriticism. This is because, the rise of Ecofeminism as a discourse that advocates for the protection, conservation, and celebration of the human and non-human aspects of nature is closely knitted to the rise of Ecocriticism as a unique discourse that unequivocally advocates for the protection of the natural environment. Pasi (2018:2) postulates that "Ecofeminism examines the representations of nature and women." This delineates the relationship between Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism. In furtherance to this assertion, Glotfelty (1996: xxiv) defines Ecofeminism as a "theoretical discourse whose theme is the link between the oppression of women and the domination of nature." A unifying theme between most scholars of Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism is the emphasis on the question of Male agency and hegemony over the female existence and the flora and fauna that surround humans. King (1983:118) had earlier hinted at this established perspective when he avowed that "the hatred of women and the hatred of nature are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing." There is a further argument linking the narrative of oppression and domination of nature and women to ecofeminism. For example, Warren (2001:1), argues that there are "Connections between the unjustified domination of women, people of colour, children, and the unjustified

domination of nature." This stretches the debate to the matter of race, children, and those economically disadvantaged.

From the foregoing discussion, Ecofeminism in this paper highlights and foregrounds the link between subordination, domination, and oppression of women and nature. Ecofeminism adopts feminist polemics in its attempt to help this paper to better decipher the symbiotic and interrelatedness between women and nature and the exploitative tendency of the male patriarchy on the environment. This is done through environmental activism that seeks to attain environmental justice. Ecofeminism as a discourse emerged in response to the rise of ecological challenges in most parts of the world, demonstrated in the form of wildfires, irregular rain patterns, erosion, rising sea levels, and a host of natural disasters that have devastated different regions of the world. It is a contemporary discourse in the Feminist movement that attempts to tackle the raging conundrum of the twenty-first century that is, climate change. It is women's attempt at "formulating ecological feminist responses to the health and environmental impacts of modernization" (Mies Maria and Shiva Vandana,2014:x) There are contesting strands of Ecofeminism. However, there is a consensus among ecofeminists, which is that there is a link between the domination and exploitation of the environment and the control and mistreatment of women in society. Furthermore, Vandana buttresses the role and relevance of Ecofeminist discourse, when she said "We are in the midst of an epic contest…between the rights of Mother Earth and the rights of corporations and militarized states using obsolete world-views" (Mies Maria and Shiva Vandana,2014:14,). Therefore, the ethics, principles, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions about human affairs are shaped, framed, and influenced by repressive male patriarchal models. The goal is to justify, defend, and pontificate on this kind of domineering, controlling, and exploitative tendencies that represent the hallmark of male chauvinism (Tong,2014, Mies Maria and Shiva Vandana,2014, Adams Carol and Gruen Lori,2014). Hence, Ecofeminism as a branch of Ecocriticism delves into the analysis, investigation, and scrutiny of the ways and manner women and nature comprising of both plants, non-human nature, and the land are oppressed and exploited by structures of Capitalism, state agency and male hegemony. Ecofeminism focuses on "all forms of domination within culture: racism, sexism, class oppression, and the exploitation of nature" (Bressler, Charles 1999, Madsen, Deborah,2000).

The term Ecofeminism was coined by the French Feminist Francoise D' Eaubonne in 1974 in her seminal work entitled ***Le Feminisme ou La Mort***. This coincided with the emergence of the second wave of feminism and the green movement. This explains their similarities in terms of ideology and perspectives. Ecofeminism aligns with the green movement in terms of its concern with the impact of human activities on the natural world and from feminism the notion that society is gendered in a way that exploits, subjugates, and dehumanizes women. Eaubonne postulates that there is a nexus between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature. She claims that the liberation and freedom of one cannot be done without the liberation of the other (Tong 2014:260). On this note, Ecofeminist discourse emphasizes how women and nature are appropriated and treated by capitalism and patriarchal societies. It also argues that gender roles are constructed by societies to sustain and perpetuate male dominance. Some of the advocates of Ecofeminism include Francoise D' Eaubonne, Greta Gaard, Carol Bigwood, Val Plumwood, Vandana Shiva, Carolyn Merchant, Mary Mellor, Maria Mies, Ynestra King, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Ariel Salleh, Carol Adams, Karen Warren and Sallie Mcfague.

Ecofeminism can be viewed from two perspectives. The first can be defined as the Radical Ecofeminism. This attempts to reverse and subvert the overwhelming structures of patriarchal domination of men over women and nature. It attempts to elevate, protect, celebrate, and exalt nature which is the repository and site of the non-human and the emotive. (Gerrard, 2011:24) This camp propagates the notion that women are closer to nature in all ramifications. The second camp which historically follows the first camp, disagrees with the claim of the radical ecofeminists, about an affinity between nature and women. They repudiate the idea of a "feminine essence" that privileges women's agency and attachment to nature. Despite this debate, this paper aligns with the principles of radical ecofeminism. It contends that the oppressive structures that exploit, plunder, and maim women and the environment must be challenged and their dominance corrected to salvage the natural environment. These principles will be used to interrogate Imbue Imbolo's *How Beautiful We Were* because it is a fitting argument that exposes her climate activism for environmental justice.

Environmental Justice in Imbue Imbolo's *How Beautiful We Were*.

Imbue Imbolo's narrative in *How Beautiful We Were* (2021) poignantly explores the harsh presence of capitalist neo-colonial structures epitomized through Pexton, a multinational oil company, and their destructive and exploitative effect on the lives of the people of Kosawa, a nebulous Postcolonial State in Africa, and their natural environment. Pexton's exploration of the land leads to cases of oil spillage that pollutes the village water, and air and unleashes diseases, death, and penury on the indigenous people of Kosawa. The strange changes in the ecosystem of Kosawa charge the people to seek financial reparation and ecological solutions to their predicaments in the form of environmental justice from Pexton. After repeated promises of cleaning up the land and financial compensation by Pexton are not met, the people decide to constitute a force of rebellion, activism, and resistance against the company.

Imbolo weaves her narrative around the effect of oil exploration, oil spillage, and environmental pollution, to emphasize the palpable relationship between climate change and global poverty. Her narrative is more critical of how multimillion-dollar companies are preying on poor societies to deprive them of their natural resources at the expense of their environment. This environment serves as an employer of labour and provides food and shelter for the populace that is domiciled in that area. The activities of farming and fishing are carried out on the land and water to feed and trade for survival. This is achieved through a manipulative engagement through inducement with large sums of money, favours, and material gifts of the leadership of these societies at both the local and state levels. This complacency is aptly epitomized in the character of Woja Beki, the village and his corrupt alliance with representatives of Pexton embodied by the satiric characters renamed the Round One, the Sick One, and the Leader. The condition of the land is captured by the first-person narrator in the first chapter when he laments "We should have known the end was near. How could we not have known? When the sky began to pour acid and rivers began to turn green, we should have known our land would soon be dead" (p.1). This illustrates how the activities of Pexton have maimed the land, making it no longer productive for the inhabitants of Kosawa village. It signifies the end of the survival of the human species in that area. This is because, without the land, human beings can not survive. The narrator further meditates about "…how the air and water of Kosawa progressed from dirty to deadly." (25) It is a pathetic situation because the people of Kosawa remember the fun memories of how peaceful

and prosperous their community was before the arrival of Pexton and its agents. it was plunged into an ecological crisis after Pexton

> …decided to add a new oil well at Gardens. It was then, with increased wastes dumped into it, that whatever life was left in the big river disappeared. Within a year, fishermen broke down their canoes and found new uses for the wood. Children began to forget the taste of Fish. The smell of Kosawa became the smell of Crude. The noise from the oil field multiplied; day and night we heard it in our bedrooms, in our classrooms, in the forest. Our air turned heavy…At the end of that first dry season, a pipeline burst, and oil flooded the farm of the mother of one of my friends-her family barely had any harvest that year; some days, I had to share my food with her during recess (p.25).

The arrival of hunger into households in Kosawa heralds a new dimension to the effect of environmental degradation in the community. Those who also engage in farm activities to feed and support their husbands are forcefully detached from the land. Those who attempt to soldier on with their farming activities are discouraged by the poor yield of their once-fertile lands. And sometimes "…a new spill turned into a fire that ravaged the farms of six families…" (p.25) The fishermen can no longer guarantee a rich harvest of fish from their territorial waters. The effect of poverty on the community, especially on women is highlighted as women bear the brunt of these circumstances. They sustain the activities of the household, taking care of their husbands and children. A hungry woman cannot carry out the traditional roles assigned to her by society. This lack of economic and domestic chores led to conflict not just within the household, but within the individual and the community as a whole.

In Furtherance to this, Imbolo is critical of the destruction of lives that the activities of Pexton bring to the Kosawa Community. It is a community of people dying under the suffocating effects of polluted air, water, and land. Infants, adults, and animals are all enduring one form of disease or the other without a cure. This is because under the soil in Kosawa are buried "old, rusty pipelines" (p.26) that spill pain and destruction on the people. The people of Kosawa not long after the oil exploration activities had to count their loss. There is the case of "two children died in one month, both of them having suffered high fevers but otherwise different symptoms" (sic) (p.26). Closely following these episodes of death is the collapse of Wambi, who had "started coughing…then began vomiting blood" (p26) After his death and burial. This strange cough began "echoing across the school compound and bouncing from hut to hut, some children urinating blood, others burning with fever no amount of cold baths could bring down, several dying" (p.26). Closely following these episodes of death, is the collapse of Juba, who is resuscitated by the custodians of the ancestral spirit Jakani. Jakani's verdict is that "the children's suffering was of this world, not from the spirit world; it was from something poisonous in our village which was entering their stomachs" (p.26). Despite this suspicion, and Bissau's reference to the water as a source of these diseases and death, Pexton after fetching samples of their water and taking them to their lab in Bezam denies this claim. However, for precaution's sake, they suggest to the villagers to boil the water for thirty minutes before taking it. This still does not solve the problem, as Juba's illness is thought to be "no ordinary illness, this disease which started with him moaning from body aches before progressing to a fever so high his body gyrated like a fish on dry land." (p.27)

Imbolo throws a scathing criticism of the hypocrisy, and selfish tendencies of these male-dominated multi-million-dollar oil companies spread across different oil-producing postcolonial states in Africa, like Angola, Nigeria, Algeria, and Libya. Their concern as always is how to safeguard and further their capitalist goals. This is driven by profit and not loss. Pexton is unable as a company to carry out adequate research on the causes of death within that local community. Oil spillage and gas flaring caused by the company are the cause of the destruction of lives and farm produce within Kosawa and communities like it. Malabo's activist spirit is ignited when his son, Juba faints, and his spirit oscillates between the world of the living and the dead. The anger, frustration, and despair that entraps Malabo's family, motivates him to further lay a block on the foundation of protest and rebellion started by the madman Konga. His first move is to persuade the Village head, Woja Weki to intercede for intervention on behalf of the village. He wants to tell the Pexton officials who reside in Bezam "how it feels for a man to watch his only son die because of the abomination they've brought upon the land" (p.29) Molabo wonders "How can people not care about children? When the village head is not supportive of his pleas, complaints, and rhetorical questions that echo the cruelty of oil exploration in his village, Malabo takes matters into his own hands, and Juba's collapse serves as a turning point in his struggle. At Bezam, he informs the District Officer to "for our sake, replace their pipelines, because it wouldn't be long before spills entered our homes and killed us in our sleep." (p.29) The District Officer responds that "the pipelines were fine, that occasional leaks and spills meant nothing, pipelines the world over spilt" (p.30). This response aligns with the adamant disposition of Pexton as a company, and Woja Beki, their village head. It also symbolizes the nature of bribery and corruption that is prevalent in the activities of Pexton and its cronies in all the villages where oil exploration takes place. The men who occupy the position of leadership have failed their community. Here corruption reigns supreme, as Malabo recalls Woje Beki's claim that:

> Pexton has been paying people off in the district office to shut their eyes, or turn them to the ground, or to the sky, to anywhere but the children dying in front of them…How could people show such contempt for the laws of the spirit? Was money so important that they would sell children to strangers seeking oil (p.30)

Woje Beki's claim is a demonstration of his hypocrisy. This is because he is part of the system of exploitation that afflicts Kosawa. No wonder he is seen, "living in a brick house and drinking bottled water from Bezam and wearing new shirts and trousers from America…he loves to wear as he stands over the coffins of children, spilling water out of his fishlike eyes" (p.31). Woje Beki is more interested in displaying his ill-gotten wealth to intimidate his people, at the expense of their lives and sources of livelihood. There is a clear case of treachery against the peasants of Kosawa. The people are betrayed. There are conspiracies against them between government and Pexton, and between Pexton and Woje Beki, their village head and custodian of culture. As far as Pexton as a company is concerned, the people of Kosawa must continue to endure the calamity that their presence has brought to the community. The company is willing to invest its resources in creating and sustaining friendships that will allow them to continue to destroy the environment. Imbolo emphasizes this fact to draw attention to the fact that when it comes to environmental and climate issues, the poverty and selfishness of men are great enablers of environmental degradation and exploitation by capitalist structures globally.

Consequently, the theme of death and waste of lives which accounts for the general issue of absentee fathers that the text is riddled with is greatly linked to the efforts of the company to squash rebellion and protest among the natives of Kosawa and the surrounding villages, as well

as those who are resident in Bezam, the site that houses the headquarters of Pexton. The Madman, Konga, Malabo, Bongo, and others who had gone to Bezam to challenge the environmental injustices meted on them by Pexton's disappearance further entrenches the relations between the exploitation of the environment and that of women that Ecofeminism argues and gives credence to Imbolo polemics of visibilising Female struggle in seeking environmental justice. Mama, Lulu, and Yaya, all women who have experienced pain from the absence of their Men are forced to endure physical detachment from their partners, psychological trauma, and economic lack due to the fact they do not have support from their partners. No wonder, they take turns to console themselves. Older mama consoles the younger woman when she says "…sorry for Papa's role in her family's pain, and Lulu asks Mama why is it that women feel they have to apologize for their men's failings-when was the last time a woman was the source of her village's suffering." The conflict in Kosawa resolves around the power dynamics and struggles between indigenous men and men who are expatriates on a mission to exploit the land of its resources in collusion with men in government. This further entrenches the arguments of Ecofeminist, that there is a relationship between the oppression of women and the destruction of the environment by men. There is no recourse to the female folks in the decision-making in these issues. However, as the events in the narrative show, the martyrs of the struggle are not just the men who die during the struggle, but the living who are mostly women, bear a significant burden of the decisions, actions, and inaction in this male-dominated affair.

This burden of death and its consequences trickles down to the growth and development of the girl-child. This is emphasized in the experiences of Nubia and her entire household. They have to endure a lot of hardship after their father a Palace guard who is sympathetic to the cause of the resistance to land exploitation is executed by the president for treason. His body and those of his comrades are "left for crows to feast on" (p.276). Her experience is encapsulated in her words, "Fathers-doesn't our pain begin and end with them?" This pain is seen in the trauma, depression, and insanity that the girl-child exhibits in response to these horrific experiences. Nubia's father when he was alive had planned that his daughter was going to grow up to become a carrier of Kosawa's dreams and this new nation when finally liberated from Pexton and its agents of exploitation, will be named Nubia, an act geared towards immortalizing her, had to turn to prostitution to pay her way through school. Her body had to endure the dehumanization of commodification at the hands of men. Nubia had to become a tool of pleasure for the satisfaction of men's carnal urges. This is because after her father's execution;

> Her dad's relatives arrived from the village with a message: her mother had to leave the house, which now belonged to her father's eldest brother, the head of the family. Her mom did not beg. She did not tell them his Excellency had taken all of her husband's money, so they had nothing, only the house. Her mom packed her children's money, so they had nothing, only the house. Her mom packed her things, hiding her tears. She took them to a friend's house and listened as the friend explained why she couldn't let them stay. The friend said everything but the truth about why she could no longer associate with them, the family of an enemy of the republic; she couldn't say she had privileges to safeguard, a husband's job to protect, children whose bright futures she had to ensure. To the next friend they went, and the next, until they had no one, until Nubia learned that world abounded in women who are afraid to be bitches (p.276)

This foregrounds the cross of shame, embarrassment, and harassment that Nubia and her mum had to undergo after the demise of their father. It is a cruel world for both mother and daughter, all emerging from the cruelty of men fighting over the agency of the land and its resources to the detriment of women and the girl-child. The family is an extension of male patriarchy and its usual demonstration of selfishness and quest to amass wealth for self-aggrandizement. The head of her father's family is more interested in inheriting the properties and house of his late brother than providing for the window his brother left behind and her daughter.

Also, Imbolo in *How Beautiful We Were* consciously enacts the characterization of Thula, to depict the role Women play in resisting environmental exploitation and their role in environmental activism that is seldom recorded or celebrated in archival documents in most patriarchal societies. She sets out to re-create a heroine who is an inspiration to other women, for her sacrifices and leadership role during the struggle to defend Kosawa and its environment. It was Thula who first recognized the power of education to spur change in her society. It was Thula who pushed to be allowed to go to school in Bezan against all odds. A young girl who had an insatiable desire for transformative knowledge. This quest for education took her to Bezam and eventually saw her fly to America to learn the tricks and modern principles of activism and community struggle. In her studies, Thula at the onset believed in the use of non-violent means to achieve her goal of liberating Kosawa. She "believed still that goodness would triumph." In her letter to her comrades at home, she alludes to

> great men whose lives and works she'd been studying closely, men who had changed their countries without committing acts of destruction or shedding blood. We could do it too,…by bringing our enemies to our side, breaking down the wall that stands between them and us, showing them that our children are their children, their children are our children; that was what her father died for, to tell people in Bezam that truth (p.239)

Thula's initial strategy for confronting Pexton is rife with idealist naivety, borne out of her study of other revolutionary movements and struggles in America, Latin America, and Asia. Hence, in her initial letters to her Male comrades, she advises them against violence of any sort. Rather, she employs them to mobilize the people to march toward freedom, she believes in the power of non-violent struggle, protest, and positive revolutions toward rescuing the land and their environment in Kosawa. In her letters, her tone revealed to the youths in Kosawa that "her eight years had done nothing to diminish her love for her birthplace" (p223). When she falls in love with the journalist Austin in America, the first conflict in her relationship stems from her undying love and fidelity to her homeland. When he demands moderation in her quest to save her home and pleas for her to concentrate on her education, Thula's pain is captured in her letter to the youths when she says "I know he doesn't understand. How could he, when he didn't live our brand of fragile innocence? When his childhood didn't end with friends dying in succession? When he never went to sleep wondering if he'd live to see the next day, wondering if soldiers or drinking water would be his demise? How can he appreciate our resolve to give to our children what Pexton stole from us?" (p.224). Thula's activism is a selfless one. She makes financial sacrifices by sending money as a student to the struggle while away from home and is willing to sacrifice her love life with Austin, when he proposes marriage and demands she remains in America, for the sake of the struggle to liberate Kosawa from environment despoliation. She rejects his proposal and returns home to Kosawa.

However, this strategy of non-violence did not yield any results for the people of Kosawa and the surrounding villages. Thula after mobilizing the people and marching on the capital to make demands to Mr. Fish, the representative of Pexton. After the Restoration Movement's support and the suing of Pexton in America. The vision and goals of "Liberation Day" are defeated. Nothing happens to ameliorate the suffering of the people, except for peanuts paid in the form of compensation and occasional bottled water supplied to the villages. After continuous "mudslides caused by government mass deforestation; lands under seizure by decrees; dying children; raping soldiers; schools with collapsed roofs" (240). Thula reiterates to Mr. Fish and Pexton, the fact that for the people of Kosawa and the neighboring villages "Money is just a small part of the issue. We deserve to live in a safe environment." (p.249)

Because of the collusion between the government leadership of "His Excellency," Pexton and its foreign supporters, as well as the local leadership under Woja Beki, they operate a seamless scheme targeted at attaining their selfish gain of self-actualization in terms of amassing wealth by exploiting the environment and crushing all forms of resistance, protest or revolution that stands against them. To the extent that soldiers were unleashed on defenceless women and children. The portraiture of violence that the people suffered is depicted in these lines;

> Young women returned home with accounts of how their underwear was ripped off, their legs pried open by three or more soldiers-some women couldn't recall how many soldiers had mounted them. The sister of one of us was among them. A cousin, barely out of girlhood but with the body of a woman, was left bleeding for days, her womb in danger of becoming useless. Our wives cried, as did our mothers, fearing their turn would inevitably come (p.254)

These happenings transform Thula from a one-time non-violent advocate to a violent crusader against Pexton and its capitalist supporters. Thula begins to sponsor the youths to acquire guns to fight the company and the soldiers of the government who are terrorizing the people of Kosawa and the surrounding villages. The youths had to transform themselves to become "the spears of our people." Spears that will be thrown at the colonial monster Pexton. Thula facilitates the acquisition of weapons and pays for their training by an experienced military officer.

Furthermore, Thula's ultimate sacrifice for the liberation struggle is demonstrated in her bearing the burden of sedation, so that a ritual is carried out by the twins to turn her into the bearer of the gods and the chosen one to lead the revolution. The ritual makes her "a woman above all men" (p258). As the people proclaimed she was "Thula Nangi, our sister, back from America, ordained by the spirits to lead us to victory over our adversaries." Thula is transformed and from here henceforth becomes vibrant and violent when the need arises revolutionary. Thula went further to create a political party known as the United Democratic Party, to challenge the corrupt government of his excellency in elections and lost. When all her tactics at liberating her people fail, Thula takes up arms with her comrades to violently make one final statement in protest. It was an act that immortalized her in the minds and hearts of both the young and old in Kosawa, Bezam, and the surrounding villages. In this last show of defiance, Thula and her comrades are crushed by government military might. Her myth and place in the struggle however assured. The story of Thula and the Five is engraved through time and space. In all the tragedies that befell Kosawa, it was Sahel who was greatly affected by the death of different generations of her family members. Starting with Malabo her husband, Bongo her brother-in-law, Thula her sister-

in-law, and the countless friends and acquaintances whom she witnessed their massacre and death.

Conclusion

Imbolo's narrative paints a grim picture of the struggles, sacrifices, and trauma that women suffer in communities and societies where oil spillage, environmental pollution, and climate change have affected people's sources of livelihood. She also makes a compelling argument for the heroic roles women play in salvaging their society. By so doing, it validates the Ecofeminist thesis that postulates a nexus between environmental exploitation and the violation and exploitation of women in society and advocates for environmental justice which advocates for the proper use of the environment in a way that benefits man and society without destroying the natural order of things in the environment.

References

Adams J & Gruen L. (2014) *Ecofeminism (Feminist Intersections with Other Animals & The Earth*. London: Bloomsbury.

Biama et. al. (2022) "A Voice of Resistance and Activism: A critique of Imbolo Mbue's *How BeautifulWe Were." African Educational Research Journal,* vol. 10, Issue 3, 2022, pp. 312- 320. DOI: https://doi.org/10.30918/AERJ.103.22.044.

Zaggi, D. (2016) *An Exploration of Virtue Ethics And Its Relational Value: A Comparative Study in the light of Romanus Cessario, James F, Keenan, and Joseph J.Kotva.* An unpublished Dissertation, Submitted to the Faculty of Theology in Fulfilment of the Requirement for a Doctoral Degree in Theology.

Mies, M., & Shiva, V. (2014). *Ecofeminism (Critique, Influence, Change)*. New York, NY: Zed Books.

Mbue, Imbolo. (2021) *How Beautiful We Were*. New York: Random House.

Merchant, C. (2013). *Earth care*: *Women and the Environment*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Garrard, M. (2011). *Nature, Art, and Gender in the Renaissance Italy*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

Plumwood, V. (1993). *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. New York, NY: Routledge.