

---

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **A Postcolonial Ecocritical Reading of Zakes Mda's *The Whale Caller* and Helon Habila's *Oil on Water***

**Nouf H. Alharbi**

*MA Scholar- Department of English, College of Languages and Translation-University of Jeddah, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia*

**Corresponding Author:** Nouf H. Alharbi, **E-mail:** nalharbi0484.stu@uj.edu.sa

---

**ABSTRACT**

This paper explores environmental devastation in Africa as presented in the works of Zakes Mda's *The Whale Caller* (2005) and Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* (2010). It also investigates how these novels portray the economic activities introduced by colonialism and how they negatively affect the achievement of sustainable development in both South Africa and Nigeria. The research employs a postcolonial ecocritical approach that examines the relationship between post-colonial land and humans and how, together, they form the environment. Therefore, the study analyzes the events and characters associated with environmental problems in the two narratives to critique the hegemony of the Western development discourse and to reveal its contradictions. The narrative highlights the ecological crisis by drawing attention to how uneven development impacts people, flora, and fauna. This study contributes to the ongoing scholarly discussions that focus on the development discourse produced by the neocolonial ideology and questions its viability for the sustainable wellbeing of postcolonial communities and lands.

**KEYWORDS**

Environment, pollution, poverty, tourism, petroleum, development, ecocriticism, neocolonialism, *The Whale Caller*, *Oil on Water*

**ARTICLE INFORMATION**

**ACCEPTED:** 28 June 2023

**PUBLISHED:** 02 July 2023

**DOI:** 10.32996/ijllt.2023.6.7.2

---

### **1. Introduction**

Saro-Wiwa's death was widely seen as an instance of tragic heroism in which the life-long fight he took up on behalf of his impoverished people became emblematic of both local and global struggles against the depredations of international capitalism and for the right to clean the earth. (Huggan and Tiffin 37)

The story of Ken Saro-Wiwa, Africa's first environmental martyr who was executed in 1995, is significant historical evidence of the conflict between the dominant, power-holding foreigners and the Nigerians. Saro-Wiwa and eight of his Ogoni relatives were held for trial and later executed for protecting their land. Thus, as a Nigerian writer and eco-activist, Saro-Wiwa succeeded in showcasing both the ecological disaster and the Ogoni people's general struggle for human rights.

Cultural and environmental awareness are central themes for most African writers who call for responsible interaction with nature, known as the ecocriticism approach. Ecocriticism is an earth-centered approach in literary criticism that focuses on the relationship between humans and the environment around them. In other words, scholars aim to analyze literary texts to highlight ecological concerns and to raise awareness in society. The term "ecocriticism" was coined by William Rueckert. According to him, the word eco comes from the Greek root word oikos, which means earth or household, and the word logy means logical discourse (106). Rueckert asserts that the concept of ecocriticism applies ecological perspectives to the study of literature. Likewise, Cheryl Glotfelty defines the term as the study of the relationship between the physical environment and literature (xviii). Moreover, Lawrence Buell classifies ecocriticism as "as a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment

to environmentalism's praxis" (430). While connecting the human and nonhuman worlds, this critical approach should include ethical stances and a commitment to nature.

In the recent past, ecocriticism has been concerned with nature and wilderness as critics engage with ecological issues. Recently, critics started to address issues at the intersection of ecocriticism and postcolonialism. The interdisciplinary area between the two domains has become an appealing field for many scholars to investigate. Therefore, this paper attempts to analyze *The Whale Caller* (2005) by Zakes Mda and *Oil on Water* (2010) by Helon Habila from a postcolonial ecocritical perspective.

*The Whale Caller* is a true representation of the South African environment in the post-apartheid period. The whale caller, the main character in the novel, lives in the coastal village of Hermanus, a favorite destination for whale-watching tourists that unintentionally suffers from environmental issues due to the rapacious expansion of tourism. On the other hand, *Oil on Water* reflects the destruction of the Nigerian landscape and the socio-economic conditions of Nigerian citizens in the Niger Delta. It follows a young journalist, Rufus, who travels into the Niger Delta with his hero, Zaq, a famous reporter, to search for Isabel Floode. She is a white woman who has been kidnapped and accidentally made a bargaining chip in the war between the Nigerian government and the locals. This war is being fought over a valuable resource, "oil", in high demand. On the side of the oil industry, the government and its military defend the profits and the machines of production against the militants who wish to liberate their people from the tyranny of the industrial complex. The militant group wishes to stop the environmental pollution and destruction that results from the oil company and its interests. However, they bring their own brand of terror to the region through their violent acts. Thus, the two novels reveal the domestic and social rifts caused by the destruction of the environment by man's pursuit of fortune and greedy nature.

From a postcolonial ecocritical perspective, a close reading of the two novels aims to observe and explore the ecological sabotage in Third World countries. It also aims to examine several related aspects in order to negotiate the causes influencing African nature by addressing these points: the impact of colonial history on the ecosystems of Nigeria and South Africa, the post-colonial disillusionment of the local population regarding their economy, the nature of development in Third World countries; and the main beneficiaries of this development.

## 2. Literature Review

African literature is rich with massive images of environmental devastation represented through oil industry contamination, land exploitation, and other types of environmental damage. Through literary productions, African writers report the injustice of transgressions against their land. Joseph Reser (2007) asserts that human behavior is the major cause of environmental degradation and that it has a direct impact on human well-being and health (4). The two African writers, Mda and Habila, in the respective texts, reflect on the concept of environmental ruin and the destructive influence on nature, especially in Third World countries which is caused by capitalism and dates back to colonization.

The majority of prior research has shown that *The Whale Caller* is a true representation of the environmental devastation in South Africa. Scholars discussed how the narrative uses different literary techniques to present eco-sabotage and land exploitation due to colonization practices in the past and tourism in the present. According to Phacharawan Boonpromkul (2016), the ongoing impact of colonialism in the postcolonial period is clearly mirrored in humans, land, and ecosystems in *The Whale Caller* (22). He asserts that the novel attempts to reveal the impact of capitalism, the indirect continuation of colonialism in South Africa that led to many environmental changes. He clarifies that the text depicts alterations in agricultural patterns as one example cited of human negative exposure. He believes that this type of land modification aims at the flourishing of the colonizer's business related to grape wine in history (24). Moreover, He argues that the text documents the colonial period when the people of South Africa suffered from poverty and oppression in the past and also reflects the impact of this oppression by portraying the overfishing of abalone by the poor. Such illegal practices are more likely to be reflected in the livelihoods of marginalized people in developing countries.

Likewise, Abdullahi Ayide (2020) notes that *The Whale Caller* depicts how global capitalism impacted South Africa's rural areas and addresses several critical issues that were largely ignored by elitists in the post-apartheid era (62). He also discusses the ways in which the text recounts how the rural area has been transformed into a modern holiday resort, including triple-story buildings for international tourists. Another point that Ayide illustrates is that, while investigating the whale tragedy, the expansion of tourism is responsible for the destruction of the natural habitat of the animals. Ultimately, he argues that while no solution is proposed in the novel, it nevertheless expresses a different perspective of the South African landscape to raise environmental awareness.

In agreement with the previous study, Sanjo Ojedoja and Abubakar A.S. (2018) clarify that the novel highlights how tourism, under the new government, poses a serious threat to the environment. He argues that *The Whale Caller* reveals the abuses of this industry, in which the government subjugates animals and land as objects (91). Moreover, Brooke Stanley and Walter Phillips (2017) consider that the text points to the aggressive commodification of animals in the new neoliberal South Africa, which could heighten eco-

social concerns about development, tourism, inequality, and access to resources (10). Both argue that the novel reveals this conflict between the two main protagonists, the Whale Caller as an environmentalist and Saluni as a social critic (15). Alongside, Jason Price (2017) argues that colonial tactics and intentions to protect humans and animals in Hermanus are due to being developed by characters like Saluni. As such, the tools of this novel are used to discuss human and non-human needs in order to resist neocolonial capitalist violence (58).

Furthermore, Meg Samuelson (2013) clarifies that *The Whale Caller* focuses on deep ocean crossings to challenge human exploitation of the sea. He argues that the overdevelopment of the shoreline, such as building luxurious sea-front accommodations for tourists, is intended for economic purposes and thus enhances the business of tourism (19). Thus, the whale's tragic end is a clear consequence of the human modification of the shoreline. As Subodh Mahato (2018) states, animals' roles in the novel are essential in strengthening the idea of wilderness as it offers a keen ecological consciousness of the sea and its creatures and, most importantly, resistance to neocolonial violence (187).

According to Marita Wenzel (2009), the reliance on magical realism in *The Whale Caller* opens the door to mythology as a platform for cultural critique and change. Although the novel is based on historical incidents and authentic places, the use of magical realism establishes the important link between nature and humans (131). Moreover, Wenzel illustrates that the imaginative representation of myth is a reaction against the harsh reality of apartheid, which also implies "realizing the danger in transgressing natural boundaries" (131).

In another study, Ralph Goodman (2008) agrees with Wenzel that in *The Whale Caller*, this complex love relationship is reflected by using satire, irony, myth and magical realism in the form of the whale as an imaginative recontextualization of the problems of contemporary South African society. Therefore, the notion of magic realism in human and nonhuman relationships seems significant to address the effects of global capitalism on the animal world and humans (105).

Both Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2015) believe that the intensive and irrational use of animal and human relationships in *The Whale Caller* serves to illuminate the reader's mind about animal justice. They add that there is less progress towards other species' rights; therefore, "most postcolonial writers have chosen to address the question of these wrongs, less through legal or rationalistic frameworks than in imaginative writing" (219).

Similarly, a number of recent studies have found that *Oil on Water* illustrates the environmental damage caused by colonial institutions' excesses and the government's cooperation. Saba Pirzadeh (2021) elucidates that Nigeria, as one of the African developing countries, although rich in natural resources, suffers from what is known as neoliberalism. It shares with other African countries the history of colonial repression and environmental exploitation. However, the distinctive project that has a huge impact on the Nigerian people and land is the creation of the oil industry (4). He points out that in 1908, oil was discovered in the Niger Delta and was exploited by major international oil companies such as Shell, Elf, and Gulf. He believes that *Oil on Water* portrays the fixation of nature as a producer in the logic of neoliberal capitalism (4). Thus, he points to another side of capitalism, i.e., the aggressive abuse of natural resources.

For Pirzadeh, the text exposes real scenes of Nigeria's polluted environment, such as unjust practices committed by oil companies that affect people, land, and wildlife. He also discusses the reality of the expansion of Nigeria's oil infrastructure and clarifies that "the extraction of crude oil in the Niger region is enabled by a network of onshore oil wells, pipelines and flow stations located in the creeks [and] there are currently about 2800 oil wells connected to 130 flow stations in 218 oil fields" (4). According to him, this expansion of oil companies on both sides of the Delta River prevents and disrupts indigenous people's daily practices that are concentrated in this area, which reflects neocolonial oppression (5).

Along with this, Maximilian Feldner (2018), while emphasizing how Nigeria, as a former colony, remains in subservience to North American and European governments and corporations, indicates that *Oil on Water* points to the encroachment of neoliberal architecture on nature and the local population on account of industrialization (516). In addition, the novel pursues a testimonial approach to reflect the petro-violence in the Nigerian Delta and to record the environmental degradation and social dissolution as a result of the activities of the oil companies (521).

According to Joyce Agofure (2018), the ruling class of these African countries is dominated by the global demands which are manifested by the Western agenda. The Nigerian ruling class acts in collaboration with multinational companies. Therefore, Nigerian fiction is preoccupied with the discourse of postcolonial disillusionment. He argues that the history of tyranny by European settlers has shaped the economic domain, which in turn caused the civil war against environmental resources (249). He points out that *Oil on Water* expresses apprehension and concern over the growing inequality, hunger, poverty, and destruction of natural

resources caused by international oil companies (250). He adds that *Oil on Water* reflects the gloom of people who are subjected to dispossession and their pillaged environment.

In another study, Sule Egya (2017) points out that African novelists seek to use narrative tools to reflect perspectives that illuminate the reader's critical awareness of the nature of ecological sabotage in their country. As in *Oil on Water*, the narrative uses an aggressive discourse to resist the systematic destruction of the environment (100). In that case, Ophelia Abianji-Menang (2021) demonstrates that the expansion of the oil industry in the Delta affected the traditional sources of income of the locals, such as fishing and agriculture, which resulted in total disintegration and trauma among the local population. She adds that the oil industry in postcolonial Africa is controlled by the westerners who manage this business in the interests of their countries (6).

In a recent study, Felicity Hand (2021) argues that *Oil on Water* gives voice to the devastated land to raise the reader's ecological awareness by using a provocation narrative style (117). Likewise, Oholi V. Idakwo (2020) argues that the *Oil on Water* writing style represents the traumatic reality of a divided culture; it seeks to provoke postcolonial rules according to which "there actually exists a wide gulf between the interest of the colonizing West and that of the subjugated natives of sub-Saharan Africa" (1329). In addition, Victor Idakwo and Stephen Ogunpitan (2019) assert that "The future of trauma theory lies in extending her vision beyond the traditional characteristics of the perpetrator of trauma and victims" (56).

After reviewing the previous studies, I find that most of the selected publications on both novels repeatedly argue that neocolonialism warns of the potential reversal effects of unregulated forms of aid, trade, and foreign direct investment in poverty reduction and welfare in African countries. At this point, this paper aims to investigate the concept of "development," which was not previously tackled enough in previous studies on *The Whale Caller* and *Oil on Water*. It also tries to engulf gaps not recognized before to examine how the notion of "development" is portrayed in the two texts and how it is related to neocolonialist ideology, whose logic increasingly threatens to dominate the various and complex forms of entitlement.

### 3. Methodology

This study is informed by the postcolonial ecocritical theoretical framework. Since the chosen texts explore African environmental degradation in their narratives, the chosen theoretical framework will prove appropriate to investigate issues at the intersection of colonialism, environment and local economy. According to Rob Nixon explores, this theory is applicable because it suggests bridging the existing perspectives between the two fields, environmentalism and postcolonialism, to integrate environmental issues into a postcolonial approach to literature and vice versa (235). Moreover, this theory suggests investigating the imperial underpinnings of environmental practices in colonized societies of the present and past (Huggan and Tiffin, 3), which is more appropriate to examine the subversive rhetoric of the African postcolonial narrative.

According to Richard Kerridge, ecocriticism aims to evaluate literary texts in terms of their coherence and importance as a reaction to the environmental crisis (5). Eco-critics build an ecological consciousness and compose ecological ethics by tracking environmental representations in literature, observing debates in different cultures, and subverting our anthropocentric view of the world. In an essay published in 2002, Nixon aims to provide reasons for the late manifestation of the ecological role in postcolonial literary studies:

Broadly speaking, there are four main schisms between the dominant concerns of postcolonialists and ecocritics. First, postcolonialists have tended to foreground hybridity and cross-cultivation. Ecocritics, on the other hand, have historically been drawn to discourses of purity: virgin wilderness and the preservation of "uncorrupted" last great places. Second, postcolonial writing and criticism largely concern themselves with displacement, while environmental literary studies tended to give priority to the literature of space. Third, and relatedly, postcolonial studies has tended to favor the cosmopolitan and the transnational. Postcolonialists are typically critical of nationalism, whereas the canons of environmental literature and criticism have developed within a national (and often nationalist) American framework. Fourth, postcolonialism had devoted considerable attention to excavating or reimagining the marginalized past: a history from below and border histories, often along transnational axes of migrant memory. By contrast, within much environmental literature and criticism, something different happens to history. It is often repressed or subordinated to the pursuit of timeless, solitary moments of communion with nature. (235)

Nixon's observation of the silence of early postcolonial theory on the environment can be considered an early cry for a contribution to ecocriticism from the subordinated group. Moreover, postcolonial ecocriticism as a new literary approach considers postcolonial studies in combination with environmental criticism, a connection that is still under discussion and presents some issues. Interestingly, some of the previously mentioned concerns for ecocriticism can also be observed in postcolonial studies, specifically in the problematic use of the prefix post-, which stresses the ongoing impact of neocolonialism. Moreover, in postcolonial ecocriticism, Huggan and Tiffin seek to establish further arguments and contributions to the theory. They argue that by looking

into its constitutional perspectives, these two literary theories seem to be in conflict since ecocriticism "has tended as a whole to prioritise extra-human concerns over the interests of disadvantaged human groups, while postcolonialism has been routinely, and at times unthinkingly, anthropocentric " (17).

Accordingly, development became inextricably linked to colonial power, which Amitav Ghosh observes has not changed, and he contends that the global environmental catastrophe is not solely the result of capitalism but that empire and imperialism must also be incriminated (87). Indeed, despite the decolonization of many countries in the mid-twentieth century, colonial power structures continued to dominate international affairs, such as "sustainable development." Huggan and Tiffin emphasize that "it is economic growth, rather than the environment [and the people], that needs to be protected, and that environmental degradation is to be fought against principally because it impedes this growth" (34).

Hence, Chernoh Alpha M. Bah claims that neocolonialism has been covering up "the hand of the colonizing nation" whose reformed project is "the creation of a state which is theoretically independent with all the trappings of international sovereignty but whose economic system and political development is directed from the outside." (4). Consequently, ex-colonial countries are under the burden of an ineffective system that ignores the real needs of the population and neglects land conservation.

As a result, "the ecological gap between colonizer and colonized" (Huggan and Tiffin 2) is getting wider daily, and despite widespread environmental awareness, it appears difficult to resolve "the Northern environmentalisms of the rich, always potentially vainglorious and hypocritical, with the Southern environmentalisms of the poor, often genuinely heroic and authentic" (2). Therefore, Western environmentalists risk falling prey to the same assumptions that drove past neocolonial projects. In this regard, Roman Bartosch confirms:

By identifying non-Western natural sites as worthy of preservation, Western environmentalism perpetuates the notion of postcolonial societies as being 'under-developed' or 'developing'. Thus, it integrates the natural world into the framework of Western control and nourishes the myth of 'developmentalism' (75).

Bartosch's claim is an invitation to investigate the type of development in non-western areas, whether it is true or a deception. In response to this "myth", Huggan and Tiffin argue that one of postcolonial ecocriticism's main functions "has been to contest – also to provide viable alternatives to –western ideologies of development" (29). By critically examining these notions, postcolonial ecocriticism gains a new level of engagement with social and political issues, overcoming "the apolitical tendencies of an earlier form of ecocriticism" (Huggan and Tiffin 11). However, this engagement is most often seen in literature, which is still the primary way in which postcolonial ecocriticism attempts to examine more sustainable alternatives. Literary writings, on the other hand, should not be analyzed just as products whose primary goal is to urge the reader to formulate alternative answers to the continuous exploitation of ex-colonies. The aesthetic aspects of texts, on the other hand, must also be considered. Huggan and Tiffin argue that labeling certain works as "protest literature" risks "underestimating their aesthetic complexities" while admitting that "literary choices are rarely without political consequences, as postcolonial environmental writers (and indeed all writers) know" (35). In other words, postcolonial ecocriticism looks at literature first and foremost as a written text with all of the characteristics that entail, and then it considers the text's value in addressing postcolonial environmental and social issues while "[setting] out symbolic guidelines for the material transformation of the world" (14).

As well, Escobar draws on the conceptualizations of developmentalism and insists that it is as much a mechanism of discursive control as an agency of economic management, based on the assumption that the western values it inculcates are indisputably the right ones. It is also characterized by a top-down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach in which people and cultures are treated as abstract concepts, and statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of progress (44). By examining significant incidents related to environmental degradation in *The Whale Caller* and *Oil on Water*, I am keen to investigate the concept of development as a central but currently neglected intellectual task; to examine how the notion of development works as an enabling myth of neocolonialist ideology whose logic increasingly threatens to dominate the various and complex forms of entitlement.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### ***4.1 The Industry of Tourism in The Whale Caller***

African ecology is known for its dense vegetation and vast green landscapes. The continent has always tempted foreigners to explore the fascinating culture of flora and fauna. The landscape is a prominent part of the African indigenous culture, which echoes the history and points towards the genesis of human relations with the land. On the other hand, African literature shows an abundance of colonial and post-colonial changes that occurred in the environment. Zakes Mda in *The Whale Caller* tackles sensitive issues of ecology to endorse an ecological consciousness and to explore the interaction of indigenous people and culture with their environment. In this context, the novel illustrates the persistence of colonial discourse into the present through its

narrative technique of using different time levels and flashbacks, thereby paralleling colonial and postcolonial times. This chapter will analyze *The Whale Caller* to expose the different forms of ecological exploitation in colonial times, such as grapevines and ostrich farm industries and demonstrate how empire expansion and environmental manipulation are inextricably linked throughout history. It also aims to unravel how the industry of tourism, as represented in the novel, can be seen as an indirect new form of colonization that continues the environmental exploitation and damage of present times.

Apart from issues more popular among scholars, such as excessive hunting of wildlife and diamond mining, the novel reflects on two colonial enterprises established by European settlers that caused environmental changes in South Africa, namely the grapevine plantation and the ostrich feather industry. In the text, new South African people are strongly associated with the wine industry, and there appear to be two levels of dependence on it. One of the novel's main characters is nearly a slave to alcohol as a consumer. Saluni exemplifies the severity of addiction, which is a prominent theme throughout the narrative. She is an alcoholic to the point that she drinks even methylated spirits mixed with water, and her face has been "ravaged by spirits" (Mda 24). Due to her alcoholism, she has no financial security, and her excessive wine consumption is arguably the cause of her unfortunate end. On the other hand, a large number of poor individuals rely on the industry to survive and support their families.

The novel depicts the struggle of the impoverished through the portrayal of the Bored Twins' parents, who are casual vineyard laborers who work long hours for little pay and occasionally receive a few bottles of wine instead of money. Even when one of their children is gravely ill, the parents are unable to stay at home with her and must labor in the vineyard from dawn to dusk "It is the fate of all 'piece-job' workers... no work, no pay; no pension; no sick leave; no maternity leave, let alone the luxury of paternity leave; no compassionate leave even if your loved one is dying" (Mda 102). This is another form of slavery and poverty, as low-paid laborers are dispersed throughout the country with little job security and support. All of this is solely for the purpose of feeding the local and international wine markets; the vast majority of revenue would most likely go to land and business owners. In which the text explores European dominance in colonial times and the cultivation and plantation history of South Africa. It also reflects the colonial discourse of marginalized rural people.

In tracing back to the pre-colonial and colonial periods, the grapevine did not exist in the South African environment before the European arrival. According to Stefan K Estreicher (2014) in *A Brief History of Wine in South Africa*, thousands of grapevine stems were transported from France and Germany in 1655, and the Dutchman Jan Van Riebeeck, the first Commander of the Dutch East India Company, was the first to plant them in South Africa (504). Moreover, Estreicher adds, before the invasion of the Europeans, the indigenous peoples of southern and western Africa were the San and the Khoikhoi. The San, sometimes known as Bushmen by Europeans, were inland hunter-gatherers. The Khoikhoi, often known as the Hottentots by Europeans, were nomads who lived along the seashore. Some of them hunted to defend their herds and flocks, pursuing a transhumant pastoralism lifestyle (Estreicher 505). The Europeans effectively conquered the tip of this continent using political, military, religious, and ecological methods, just as they had conquered other colonial territories. The Indigenous peoples' lifestyles and livelihoods in South Africa transformed dramatically with the arrival of European colonists. Thus, with the growing number of settler farmers, many individuals became farmhands or workers on colonial farms instead of hunting, herding, or foraging. Therefore, all of this appears to have resulted in major changes to the environment, people's occupations, and the region's demographic structure.

A significant scholar who investigated the relations between ecology and imperialism is Alfred W Crosby, who emphasizes that "perhaps the success of European imperialism has a biological, an ecological, component" (7). Crosby claims that a variety of ecological elements, ranging from the most basic factors such as trade wind patterns and even weeds and domestic animals native to each place, might all play a role in the military advancement of European exploration and imperialism. These changes include, for example, changes in agricultural methods and patterns as a result of more improved tools or technology; intensive production of cash crops required by European markets; increased exploitation of raw materials and natural resources; the expansion of urbanity; and the change in the demographic structure of the entire region are all examples of these changes. To be precise, with roughly 3,500 primary wine producers, South Africa is now the world's eighth largest wine producer (Estreicher 523-530). These export numbers appear to be rather great for the South African GDP but actually hide the fact that the industry does not actually benefit the local population.

The ostrich feather industry is another devastating colonial project on the environment emphasized in *The Whale Caller*, in addition to the country's vineyards and wine industry. By using flashbacks, the text's detailed depiction of the abandoned colonial palace occupied by the Bored Twins' parents highlights another colonial trespass. This rumored haunted mansion once belonged to a bankrupt aristocrat who slaughtered his family and committed suicide after the ostrich feather market crashed during World War I.

[The baron] had sailed to the Cape of Good Hope to join the newly established settlement, then under the Dutch East India Company. His descendants had tried their hand at various trades until they found their niche

two centuries later in ostrich farming. By the time the baron took over from his father, the family had amassed untold riches from feathers that were in great demand by European and American fashion houses. He had built the mansion as a holiday home on the outskirts of the village of Hermanus. It was a replica of his other mansion in the Klein Karoo, where he had his ostrich farms. (Mda 27)

Here, the text describes the ostrich, a bird native to the African continent, as a potential and successful commercial opportunity in the nineteenth century. Its reference to the characteristic Cape Dutch palace, which is still a typical sight in South Africa today, may serve to remind us of the colonial construction, but the issue of exploitation in South Africa is more relevant to postcolonial environmentalists. When people think about Africa's wildlife, they typically think of hunting. Nevertheless, there was another form of animal exploitation. The ostrich, according to William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, is a significant case because it is the only substantial success of European attempts to domesticate animal species in southern Africa. They illustrate that before the 1860s, there had been some extensive requests for ostrich feathers for fans and hats until Dr William Atherstone, an Eastern Cape scientist, found a way to incubate the eggs, which allowed reproduction and breeding:

Since this big heavy bird could not fly, it was more easily farmed in small enclosures with high fences. The number of farmed ostriches climbed steadily to a peak of about 800,000 in 1910 [when] ostrich feathers sold from the Cape fetched £2 million annually. (Beinart and Hughes 72)

To demonstrate how profitable the ostrich feather industry was, many settlers and locals gave up their vineyards and converted their property to alfalfa fields to flourish in this industry. In contrast to the former method of obtaining feathers from wild ostriches, which required hunting and killing the bird for a crop of plumes, each ostrich on a farm can be plucked every seven or eight months. As a result, one may argue that domesticating wild animals is a more rational way to exploit them, particularly when the species has been hunted nearly to extinction, as the ostrich was before the mid-nineteenth century. Nonetheless, one can question the enterprise's necessity and see ostrich farming as yet another example of how the metropole made a fortune from the land and resources of the colonies to meet European market demands.

The tulip flower is another remarkable evidence of what is mentioned in the novel, which reflects the exploitation of the land by European settlers. This unique flower is mentioned in *The Whale Caller* as the source of revenue for the Dutch ostrich baron in the seventeenth century. More fascinating than the history of this plant's cultivation in the New World is Mda's detailed description of it in modern-day South Africa. This occurs when the *Whale Caller* follows Saluni to the Bored Twins' fancy Dutch mansion. When he sees the magnificent colors of wild tulips, he thinks of the ostrich baron who inherited the bulbs from his ancestor, the tulip baron, whose son was exiled to the Cape of Good Hope to work as a clerk for the Dutch East India Company. The tulip baron's son:

Planted his bulbs in his little garden, and when his children—both those from his Dutch wife and from Khoikhoi and Malay slave mistresses—were all grown up, they dug out some of the bulbs and planted them in their little gardens. It happened like that over the generations, for almost three hundred years, until the time of the ostrich baron. (Mda 105)

The above quote discusses interracial marriages or miscegenation, which could be related to cross-bred tulip species, which are described as growing "in clusters of deep purple, white, pink, yellow and red. Some petals combine different hues. There are red petals with yellow edges and violet petals with white edges" (Mda 105). Along with this unusual pattern, these tulip flowers blossom at different times than usual:

"tulips flower in spring, but these have developed erratic habits. They blossom any season they feel like blossoming ...They spread all over the garden and are not deterred by the wild shrubs and grasses and the prickly pear and other cacti that otherwise reign supreme in the garden. But they never grow beyond what used to be the borders of the original ostrich baron's garden" (Mda 105).

The unusual behavior of these hybrid tulips is both fascinating and confusing. Such an occurrence could be interpreted as magical realism; however, such erratic blossoming patterns could be the result of manipulation, such as cross pollination or plant transfer from the old world and climate to meet capitalist demands. Tulip inconsistency could be interpreted as the plant's protest of human exploitation since they appear to elude our control and become wild and unpredictable. As a result, Saluni will be frustrated later when the tulips hibernate in the spring, and she will be unable to harvest some of them to decorate the *Whale Caller's* house (Mda 126). On the other hand, these tulips reign supreme over the garden's other shrubs and grasses, but they never grow outside the baron's garden's borders. It is possible that the fact that these tulips could see the late baron's territory's limit is merely ridiculous. In truth, they may be able to flourish under specific conditions in the baron's well-kept garden, but they will not survive

the hard climate and will be unable to compete with native flora outside. Readers may attribute the tulip's unpredictable behavior to climate change, which has definitely changed flowering patterns, according to research journals and newspaper columns, but just as we can't say that the "gale-force winds rampaging at one hundred and fifty kilometers an hour" and the "freak wave that hit Hermanus" (Mda 207) in the novel's final section. However, it is also unclear whether or more likely, how far the erratic behavior of tulips in this novel is a result of global warming.

Up to this point, previous paragraphs have focused on colonial history, colonial industry, and environmental changes brought about by colonial businesses, all of which have had an impact on the South African environment and people's livelihoods. These have, to some extent, assisted in the establishment of hegemony and widened the distance between European settlers and indigenous peoples. Flashback is a technique frequently used in the text to allow travelling back to colonial times and explore European manipulation as realized in the alteration of agriculture patterns, the ostrich market, and hybrid tulips, images that emphasize the continuity of environmental exploitation inflicted on the land. On the other hand, one may argue that colonialism formally ended with the founding of the Republic of South Africa in 1961 and the breakdown of apartheid in the 1990s, yet various attempts have been made in the past to address or reconcile interracial problems. In fact, Astrid Feldbrügge refers to the novel as an attempt to expose the ongoing impact of European settlers in current times; "Mda reveals that the continuation of colonial discourse in the present in the guise of Western progress can likewise take the form of destroying the natural environment" (157) Hence, the legacy of colonialism remains, but in the form of neocolonialism in South Africa today. Besides, it reveals how colonial forms continued to coexist with environmental manipulation decades after the country earned independence from Western rule.

Current ecological abuses in South Africa are taking new forms to serve the worldwide economy and globalization. According to Huggan and Tiffin, "the often flagrant human and environmental abuses that continue to be practiced" in the name of development, tourism, and capitalism (77). Furthermore, this notion of cultural globalization, such as the worldwide spread of technologies, ideas, products, etc., is because of the expansion of globalization of economics, which can also be defined as the spread of capitalism. These concepts of capitalism and globalization of economics are formulated by the success of multinational corporations. According to Lois Tyson, "Multinational corporations contribute to the economies of developing nations by building local factories." (409). For a long time, between the late fifteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, such development ideas were directed and administered by colonizing country governors and educators. However, Tyson argues, in recent times, "the same kind of political, economic, and cultural subjugation of vulnerable regions occurs, through different means, at the hands of the very multinational corporations." (409). Therefore, the process starts when multinational corporations establish a partnership with the governments of the developing countries into which they want to expand. On the other hand, the majority of subalterns of the country's inhabitants do not necessarily derive any benefits from natural resource protection. For instance, natural resources such as soil, water, air, animals and vegetation are imperiled and destroyed by pollution as a result of industrial operations.

The industry of tourism is one of the most representative examples of the destruction often caused by multinational corporate activity. The expansion of capitalism over South Africa is addressed in Mda's novel, but not through the expansion of markets or multinational corporations employing cheap labor, nor through financial aid from monetary organizations, but rather through tourism, which is a paradoxical operation that simultaneously suppresses and empowers Third World countries. According to Anthony Carrigan in *Postcolonial Tourism* (2012):

Tourism propels environmental transformation, cultural commoditization, and sexual consumption—all processes that are acutely felt in many countries still grappling with the legacies of western colonialism. At the same time, tourism is consistently welcomed across the postcolonial world as a much-needed source of job creation and foreign exchange, even if the power relations that condition these transactions are distinctly asymmetrical. (xi)

Carrigan explores the issue of 21st-century tourism in South Africa and internationally. In the context of this novel, the Western Cape, like many other seaside cities in developing nations throughout the world, has become a significant tourist destination. The economy of the area is heavily reliant on wealthy Western tourists. One may argue that, unlike the acquisition of resources through colonialism in the past, tourism revenue does not go to any European countries but instead circulates inside the country. Nonetheless, the growth of the tourism sector leads to a greater reliance on the West and the capitalist monetary system. In addition, the industry of tourism also leads to negative environmental transformation. For example, in the novel, the beach is polluted by tourists, which affects marine life.

The industry of tourism and rapid urbanization in South Africa have double-edged effects on the indigenous people and the environment. In *The Whale Caller*, even before whale watchers and tourists arrive, the start of the tourism season is felt in the dramatic rise in living costs. The costs in Hermanus "they will peak in two months... One feels their presence in the prices that suddenly rocket through the roofs of the stores and restaurants even before one sees their funereal figures wandering in a daze



with binoculars and digital cameras weighing heavily on their necks" (Mda 130-131). Tourism not only raises the cost of life in Hermanus, the whale-watching major city in the world, but it also widens the distance between those who live in the tourist town and those who live inland; "while the town of Hermanus is raking in fortunes from tourism, the mothers and fathers of Zwelihle are unemployed" (Mda 86). Through the black economic empowerment movement, several of these impoverished inland provinces have received development in the form of electricity, telephone, and water facilities. However, due to unemployment, they are unable to afford these pleasures, and as a result, many people lose their homes because they are unable to pay their service fees. In other words, while tourism has benefited a few politicians and some local residents and has arguably aided the country's material progress, the extent to which tourism has become the backbone of the country's economy should raise concerns about uneven development and unequal income distribution, in addition to environmental degradation and waste troubles.

The novel's description of the overdeveloped village of Hermanus aims to expose the impact of tourism on the indigenous people. The whale caller returned to his town after thirty-five years and noticed many changes: "along the coastline, there were more houses, mostly white cottages and bungalows, roofed with black or red tiles... some double-and triple-storey buildings" (Mda 12). According to Ayide, these transformations into modern holiday resorts represent the neocolonial invasion of capitalism (62). Moreover, the text indirectly exposes the contradictions of development: "Many of these, he heard, belonged to rich people... belonged to retired millionaires who had decided to live here permanently (Mda 12-13). On the other hand, indigenous people with low incomes had to be displaced to find affordable houses. "It had now become impossible for an ordinary person to buy property at his childhood paradise" (Mda 13). These changes guarantee significant changes in native living conditions, resulting in conflicts of ecological ethics and justice.

The illegal abalone poacher is one of the considerable representative pieces of evidence raised in *The Whale Caller* that sheds light on the importance of wildlife conservation. When the Whale Caller discovers a sack full of abalone, Saluni asks him to return it to the poor poacher. The whale caller is irritated, saying, "But this is wrong. It is all wrong. Do you know how long it takes for those perlemoens to mature? Eight years. Eight years. I tell you." Instantly the poor man argues, "We have got to eat, sir... We have got to feed our children. Big companies are making money out of these perlemoens. The government gives them quotas. What about us, sir? Do you think if I apply for quotas, I will get them? How are we expected to survive?" (Mda 191). The discourse encourages environmentalists to reconsider environmental ethics and their self-appointed position as protectors of the natural world. Certain species should be legally protected to preserve their survival. Still, in practice, these restrictions can mean a diminished quality of life or even a threat to the livelihood of marginalized people in developing countries. One could argue that this abalone issue should be resolved within the context of South Africa or other countries where these endangered species are native, as it is not directly essential to global communities. The text, on the other hand, refutes such a simplistic answer by allowing the poacher to explain the motive for his illegal hunt:

Well-known poachers have become rich, building double-storey houses in dusty townships. Why must he be the only one who remains poor for the rest of his life? Now his ambition is to have direct access to the white middlemen who, in turn, sell to the Chinese syndicate bosses. There are established racial hierarchies in the illegal abalone trade. Coloured folk sell their harvest to white men who pay about two hundred rands a kilogram. (Mda 191)

It turns out that what motivates the poor poacher and many others to engage in this illicit activity is not merely survival but also the desire for a bigger house and a wealthier lifestyle, a temptation caused by global capitalism and materialistic values. The poor man's answer can be read as a defiant gesture of the subjugated against the white colonialist-ecologist, if not as a request for a chance to survive and flourish. While the man's ambition is not admirable, it is natural that he would not want to remain poor while his neighbors become wealthy by poaching. Similarly, tourism and capitalism raise the cost of living in Hermanus while also raising the critical voice of the narrative in terms of development and indigenous economic conditions.

Building upon the narrative's contribution in terms of tourism and poverty, which appear to remain problematic, several research studies have been published on the impediments to maximizing tourism as a development tool. Among these studies, as Christian Rogerson elucidates, one of the most critical characteristics of South Africa's national tourist policy framework in the international context is its strong commitment to tourism's performing a developmental role. More specifically, there is a strong emphasis on employment generation and business development in order to benefit the country's previously underserved communities. Therefore, the new policy frameworks have resulted in the development of a number of state-directed intervention initiatives targeted at transforming tourism, not just for accelerated growth but also as a strategy for poverty alleviation. In contrast, white people, businesses, and consortia continue to dominate tourism product ownership and facilities management. Khethiwe Malaza argues that much of the optimism around the notion of tourism to alleviate poverty is misplaced, with few individuals benefiting from these activities in general as the most important opportunities are demonstrated to be related to the sale of handicrafts, not

in management and administration sectors. Furthermore, the question of who plans tourism, for whose benefit, and so on is still debatable.

The annual Hermanus Whale Festival is a significant tourist industrial project in South Africa, reflected remarkably in *The Whale Caller*. Despite being quite a recent industry, the trend has grown rapidly and spread across the globe, turning these once-remote marine mammals into dramatic spectacles for wealthy tourists. To natives, the whale-watching industry could be a long-term venture requiring little investment, as people can directly benefit from the preservation of whales and their habitats, for example, by establishing several business projects in locations that are far away from marine life in support of environmental sustainability and also contribute to increasing the natives' income. Moreover, to environmentalists, whale watching has fewer environmental effects on the marine ecosystem than whaling or other marine recreations.

On the other hand, the whale caller is suspicious of the enterprise and expresses his concerns in the description of the whale-watching season. In the annual Hermanus Kalfiefee, everyone celebrates the arrival of the new calves. However, the focus is on tourism, mercantile trade, parties, consumption, and spectacular whale sightings rather than teaching or protection. "The locals, who don't usually care much for whale watching, are also out in throngs. Some are out to flog their wares... Processions of tourists go through the ritual of dropping coins into enamel bowls or cold drink cans without paying much attention to the performances of the boys" (Mda 17). Moreover, afternoons are ideal for tourists to spend at the lagoon, which is filled with "deafening noise from the machines of motorized water sports enthusiasts"; at several beaches "the Voelklip with its terraced lawns; the secluded Langbaai, popular with lovers and naturalists; the Kammabaai, a haven for surfers" (Mda 43); or at international restaurants that advertise "foreign cuisine, ranging from India and Chinese to French and Italian" (Mda 114). Thus, there seems to be no emphasis on understanding or educating the public or communities about whales, nor indeed conservation, as the southern right whales are merely a draw and a product that brings revenue to this seaside resort.

To better negotiate this discourse of development, the novel uses a flashback technique to compare the past and present in terms of environmental justice. In other words, the main protagonist is the critical voice of environmental injustice practices. Unfortunately, the whale caller observes these current practices in the festival in the name of development and at the same time recalls the situation forty years ago: "He saw all these things and felt like an intruder both in lives of the whale watchers and of local citizens" (Mda 13). In the past, when the whale caller was in his early twenties, he used to go to church every Sunday, where his admiration of whales started. As a kind of worship, the congregants and he dance to the beat of the drums and the music of harps and tambourines. The whale caller was fascinated by the deep sound of the kelp horn, which later became his main duty in the ritual as an official horn player. According to The Elders of the Church, the kelp horn "was a natural musical instrument that took the congregation back to its root. It was an instrument that celebrate the essence of creation. God would lend a sharper ear to the prayers of those who praised Him to the accompaniment of an instrument that was shaped by His own hand through the agency of the seas" (Mda 8). Therefore, the dance with the sacred kelp horn brought the worshipper and the whale caller closer to nature. In terms of religion, His Eminence believed that "God is speaking through this whale, my children," and that "God will send His whales to swallow us..." must not be like Jonah; whales must not first swallow us before we can work for God." (Mda 10-11). Also, he was convinced that the kelp horn had the power to communicate with the whale.

Hence, the narrative's description of the worshippers wearing snow white robes dancing and praying near the beach is aesthetical but contradictory to the present scene. This gap between the past and present has influenced the whale caller spiritually. Besides, he has a problematic relationship with human beings as "he did not seem to be friendly towards human beings, so they kept their distance from him" (Mda 13). On the other hand, he feels more comfortable with non-humans, the female whale Sharisha, in particular. Interestingly, Feldbrügge refers to this situation as othering and hyper-separation. The whale caller, in his logic, denies the gap between himself and the whale as a different species due to the dramatic changes in his town (161). Therefore, the whale caller establishes a love relationship, erotic excitement, and attraction, not with a human woman but with his favorite whale, Sharisha. Moreover, the whale caller expresses not only his love emotions but his jealousy "he yells at the male, calling them names and shooting them away from Sharisha. He shouts: Rapists! You are nothing but a gang of rapists!" (Mda 42). Thus, the whale caller lives in an ideal world created by him as a sense of rejection against the new world he observes after his return.

From an ecocentric perspective, the text raises the issue of saving whales and environmental injustice by using the whale Sharisha as a major character. At the end of the novel, Sharisha suffers from a "gaping wound... caused by a ship's propeller on her way to the southern seas" (Mda 129). In reality, such direct harm is commonly caused by the noise of the ships' engines, which reduces whales' ability to identify prey, communicate, and navigate. Sharisha's bleeding wound, which was inflicted unfairly on her and which no one can heal, makes her more deserving of compassion. The same may be said about the novel's finale, in which Sharisha is saved from stranding by the most horrific means possible, dynamite explosion. Sharisha's death is made all the more painful by the whale's extended pain. The ridiculous laughs exchanged among politicians and the media and the depiction of witnesses who "cheer and applaud like the carnival crowd" at the explosion (Mda 224). In the past, a stranded whale would have been a chance

to conduct a ritual "the Khoikhoi of old [would dance] around... [giving] their thanks to Tsiqua, He Who Tells His Stories in Heaven, for the bountiful food" (Mda 4). On the contrary, Sharisha's dying moments are welcomed as a show for tourists and an opportunity for local officials to earn media coverage. Her shredded carcass is showered on the Whale Caller before being consumed by seagulls that "scavenge on the tiny pieces strewn on the sand" (Mda 224). Sharisha represents a mute victim of human cruelty in her horrific ending. Previously, she was injured in the wild as a result of the boatman's inexperience or negligence, and lastly, she was murdered in the name of sympathy and exploited even in death. Ultimately, Sharisha's tragic death is a symbol of land contamination by illegal capitalism in the name of development and tourism. Thus, the novel discusses the impact of capitalism and industrialization on the environment by presenting various images of ecological destruction in South Africa. Similarly, the following chapter intends to broaden the discussion of land exploitation and man's manipulation of natural resources through the petroleum industries.

#### **4.2 Oil Production Concern in *Oil on Water***

"Rivers grow polluted and useless for fishing, while the land grew only gas flares and pipelines." (Habla 43)

Oil contamination in Nigeria is a major concern that has led to a serious environmental crisis. Its effects are evident at some oil extraction sites, demonstrating how the global oil apparatus continues to rely on a system of injustice, which is an integral part of neocolonial discourses and is linked to climate change, human and non-human rights, and corporate responsibilities. In particular, the effect of the discovery of oil in Nigeria by European nations in the past is still felt today and has been turned into forms of neocolonial dominance and natural resource exploitation. These forms of exploitation by the oil industry manifest as the environmental pollution caused by oil spillages and gas flares, causing indirect harm to the region's inhabitants. This chapter focuses on the representations of environmental destruction as a consequence of the oil industry through the literary text *Oil on Water* (2010) by Nigerian novelist Helon Habila.

The narrator tells the story of Rufus, a Nigerian reporter, who decides to undertake a two-week journey into the bogs of the Niger Delta in search of information about Isabel Floode, a kidnapped English woman who is the wife of an oil businessman. Rufus is inspired by the fact that Zaq, the journalist he most admires, would take part in the mission. However, Rufus witnesses the damage and contamination of the countryside caused by oil extraction and gas flaring. Furthermore, after being caught twice, first by the military and then by militants battling for control of natural resources, Rufus personally witnesses the sorrows of Delta villages ripped apart by violence and illnesses caused by oil pollution of land, water, and air.

The text applies various techniques and elements to discuss several ecological crises. The journalistic feature is a major method employed in *Oil on Water*. Furthermore, the story serves as a journalistic account and diatribe against the devastating effects of petro-violence, defined by Michael Watts as "the intersection of environment and violence: both biological violence, as it were, perpetrated upon the biophysical world, and the social violence, criminality, and degeneracy associated with the genesis of petro-wealth and its ecological destructiveness" (1). Accordingly, in a live interview in 2018 between Habila and Omolade Adunbi, moderated by Beenish Ahmed, founder of The Alignist website, Habila states that employing a journalistic style in the novel's homodiegetic narrator aims to expose environmental degradation. He adds that apart from being directly related to his work experience as a journalist, the topic of journalism is also associated with the time period in which the book was conceived, namely when militant groups began to attract attention in the international media as they began to kidnap foreign workers in the Niger Delta region. On that occasion, Habila felt the need to contribute to the discussion because he was informed of the shortfalls that the media had left unfilled. As such, he decided to "go behind the headlines" and reveal a book that could offer a different insight into the complex issue while giving voice to characters who could be essential in explaining the sufferings of the Nigerian people.

In commonality with *The Whale Caller*, *Oil on Water* applies flashbacks and nonlinear narrative techniques as an approach used to reflect the chaotic state of the Niger Delta. At this point, Maximilian Feldner indicates that tracing the novel events reveals that the two weeks of story-time are not covered chronologically. Instead, readers are confronted with a non-linear narrative that jumps back and forwards in time" (519). This structure is apparent from the beginning of this story, which begins in the middle of Rufus' journey, blending it with flashbacks and foggy memories from his life and upbringing. As Feldner asserts, writing, "the Niger Delta is depicted as a claustrophobic maze, a depiction that is also reflected on the discourse level of *Oil on Water*, whose narrative structure is complex and disorienting" (519). This confusion is heightened by "the fact that the characters repeatedly find themselves in situations they have been in before, albeit under different circumstances" (519). For instance, Rufus and Zaq are imprisoned at different times by different groups of people, but their situations are similar, demonstrating how "Habla complicates a plot that in itself is not too complex, and creates for readers an impression of disorientation, which mirrors that of the characters" (519).

On the other hand, this specific design may allude to the selective manner in which Rufus' memory recalls past events. Memories of his upbringing, profession, and initial meeting with Zaq are disconnected and interlaced into the events of the voyage, leading to the storyline's discontinuity. In this method, the text emphasizes essential characteristics related to the characters' personalities,

which are introduced through Rufus' thoughts. Furthermore, the narrative depicts Rufus' attempt to overcome the pain associated with the oil catastrophe that devastated his family, "an explosion in the barn with the oil drums. The fire flew on the wind from house to house, and in few minutes half of the town was ablaze" (Habla 1). Despite the fact that Rufus was not present when the accident occurred and that his father survived the explosion caused by his involvement in illegal oil refining, Rufus' memory collects small parts of this tragic incident that will eventually become his first journalistic success, and that will keep returning as a traumatic image, best embodied by the scar on his sister's face. As a result, the story draws parallels between the incidents related to Rufus' life and the lives of Niger Deltans by using oil as a motif that functions as a danger for all characters without discrimination. Feldner notes in this regard, "as Rufus's disorientation in the narrow and opaque canals of the Delta finds its equivalent in the readers' confusion in the maze-like construction of the narrative, the main attention is drawn to the Niger Delta and the ways its social fabric is torn apart by conflicts while its landscape drowns in oil" (525). To be specific, the storyline's structure is thought-provoking and seeks to shed light on the larger picture of endangered communities and the environment that gradually emerges from behind the journey and the protagonist's observations. Hence, the novel might be considered "an ecological, cultural force" in terms of literary, cultural ecology. In this regard, Hubert Zapf agrees that this form of work acts "not only in a thematic sense as in explicitly environmental forms of writing but in a more fundamental sense in the forms and functions of aesthetic communication" (142). Consequently, the novel's formal elements are vital to the reader's experience and comprehension of the difficult situation in the Niger Delta.

With such remarkable techniques, the text exposes oil spillage, gas flaring, sewage, oil theft, and conflict as some of the human actions that have generated a climatic and environmental disaster in the Niger Delta area. It also increases awareness about the effects of these human activities on the ecology, biosphere, and terrain in the Niger Delta region, as depicted in *Oil on Water*. As a result, the story is a depiction of what happens on Irikefe Island in terms of oil exploitation. Based on Irefeke Island, the two journalists, Zaq and Rufus, in their investigation of the kidnapped Isabel Floode, the wife of an oil executive, expose the devastation in the Niger Delta river by oil companies. Moreover, Agofure argues that *Oil on Water* portrays the harm caused to the Nigerian natural environment by the extractive industry through the eyes of Zaq and Rufus, who record the polluted rivers, gas flares, violence, insecurity, and injustice that they represent (249). Specifically, Zaq and Rufus's mission is not only to investigate the kidnapping but also the crimes conducted by the government through the military, militants, and oil corporations, therefore identifying the three agents engaged in environmental destruction.

The introduction of oil production has had a severe influence on the region, which is now completely degraded. Oil spills and gas flares that occur during petroleum activities have poisoned the water, devastated the flora and agricultural land, and contaminated a valuable water supply. The river, which used to be a source of livelihood for locals, has been "polluted and useless for fishing, and the land grew only gas flares and pipelines" (Habla 43). The most significant environmental concerns associated with petroleum and its industry in the Niger Delta of Nigeria are gas flares and oil spillage.

The severe environmental concern created by colonial oil exploitation in the Niger Delta region is shown by oil spillage and gas flaring. People in the Niger Delta area have become disillusioned and frustrated as a result of oil extraction. Despite the fact that the area has considerable oil revenue, the natives are poor and lack basic requirements like water, health, security, education, and a decent transportation network. Villages that took oil money in the beginning later found that oil spills and gas flares that lighted up the villages all day and night had already poisoned their rivers and soil, rendering them unsuitable for cultivation.

Oil spillage is a type of oil pollution that has an impact on water supplies, which reflects the negative influence of capitalism. The death of animals and humans symbolizes the destruction of wildlife and ecosystems caused by oil spilled into bodies of water. The amount of toxins in water and land is depicted by the results of Dr Dagogo-sampling Mark's lab of drinking water and blood. As Chief Ibrahim affirms these findings in a chat with the fishermen, "they talked about the dwindling stocks of fish in the river, the rising toxicity of the water and how soon they might have to move to a place where the fishing was still fairly good" (Habla 18). Spills diminish the oxygen supply in the aquatic environment, causing marine species and flora to die. As the narrator describes, it has ruined the mangrove ecology in the Niger Delta, which was formerly a suitable home for birds and fish. As a result of damaging the mangrove ecology in the Niger delta, which was excellent habitat for birds and fish, the landscape and water became barren and depressing, as the narrator reports; "over the black expressionless water, there were no birds or other water creatures" (Habla 11).

Rufus compares Irikefe Island in the past to the present and concludes that the river has become dangerous to humans and aquatic life. In an eyewitness testimony, he writes while crossing in a canoe with his guide, the fisherman, and his son, Michael, "we saw dead birds draped over tree branches, their outstretched wings black and silk with oil; dead fish bobbed white-bellied between tree roots" (Habla 10). The ecosystem has been harmed by oil, and the river's banks have become "brackish" (Habla 5). As he continues, "sometimes it was a snake, twisting and fast and slippery, poisonous. Sometimes it was an oil jute rope...strange objects would float past us: a piece of cloth, a rolling log, a dead fowl, a bloated dog belly-up with black birds perching on it" (Habla 37).

These pictures show that sewage is a major cause of water degradation as well. As Michael, the fisherman's child, observes, the water is no longer sufficient; "no crabs here now. The water is not good" (Habla 28). The narrator witnesses several ecological crises as long as he continues on the journey: "a bat flying overhead, a dead fish on the oil polluted water" (Habla 6). Rufus' comparison of Irekefe in the past and now demonstrates the environmental devastation caused by oil spills. Since their source of livelihood, water, has been tainted by oil; it is no longer suitable for fishing as it once was.

The desertification of the environment due to oil production in the text is another example of the negative impact of capitalism. Thus, oil spills are damaging not just to water sources and aquatic life but also to farms and vegetation. Instead of growing crops, the area is being used to produce gas flares and pipelines: "the meager landscape was covered in pipeline flying in all directions, sprouting from the evil smelling, oil-fecund earth. The pipes crisscrossed and interconnected endlessly all over the field. We walked inland, ducking under or hopping over the giant pipes, our shoes and trousers turning black with oil" (Habla 38). This shows the consequences of industrialization on land and the environmental devastation caused by oil. The fertile agricultural lands of the locals have been taken without compensation in order to implement oil enterprises. Oil pipes are crisscrossed over the ground, making cultivation difficult in many regions. It's paradoxical that instead of growing vegetables, the environment creates pipes.

As pipes overlap and are interconnected all over the area, oil siphoning has grown into a large industry that is primarily conducted by children while also contributing to environmental deterioration. After losing his job at the ABZ oil firm, Rufus' father relies on this to feed his family (Habla 67). He gets fuel barrels from little children and sells them to vehicles that arrive late at night with the help of police officers (Habla 69). As the popularity of selling stolen oil develops, so does the number of deaths and accidents. The narrator describes an explosion in his father's barn involving oil barrels that killed several people and ruined Rufus' family. His father was imprisoned, and his mother moved to her parents' village, where she still resides, after his sister's face was scarred (Habla 3). Rufus' closest friend, John, lost his father in the accident. He married Boma afterwards, but his fixation on her wounds drove him to abandon her and join the militants. The scars on Boma's face, her marriage, and John's father's death are permanent reflections of the devastating impact of oil extraction. Explosions like this, which are widespread in petroleum locations, cause a family breakdown and provide a larger picture of the struggle of the people who suffer irreversible harm and are left with marks that will remain with them for the rest of their lives. Oil syphoning and sabotage have become critical concerns in the Niger Delta, contributing to increased environmental devastation.

Along with previous images of environmental destruction, indigenous people are also exposed harmfully to the negative impact of oil production. The novel discusses poverty as an issue that leads to oil syphoning in the town. Despite the fact that the region is endowed with large oil profits, the locals do not benefit from them owing to inadequate government and services. The text depicts a fishing town with fishermen as residents as they earn their living from the river (Habla 115). Thus, water and aquatic species are critical to their existence. As the narrator recounts to his guide, Tamuno, the fisherman, and his son, Michael, the locals are impoverished and live in abject poverty: The youngster appeared to be ten years old, but his growth had been stunted by a bad diet; his hair was reddish and scant, and his arms, like his father's, were skeletal. Their hands were rough and calloused from seawater, and they were both clothed in the same shapeless and worn shirts and pants. They had a fishy smell and appeared as natural as seaweed (Habla 7). Their poverty is justified by their "reddish and sparse hair," "bony arms," "shapeless and fading dresses," "rough hands," and "smell fish." The fisherman and his son are symbolic depictions of the island's residents, who lack the most fundamental of human needs, food. Their development has been stunted, and they appear older than they are. Gloria, the nurse, is described in similar words by the narrator. Poverty, anxiety, and sadness had left deep lines on Gloria's face, "signs of habitual worry, or grief, and there were a few white streaks in her hair," making her look old, "I put her age at about thirty" (Habla 126).

In a debate between Zaq and Tamuno, the fisherman portrays how gloomy and unstable the future is for teenagers whose industrial jobs of fishing and farming are no longer profitable due to pollution as young people join militants to make a living by kidnapping and demanding money. Simultaneously, Tamuno, the fisherman, shares Rufus' desire for his son, Michael, to leave the area and travel to the city, where he can find work and live a better life than in the village. He begs Zaq and Rufus to take his child, Michael, to Port Harcourt so that he can attend school since his future in the Niger region is uncertain. He believes that "he has no future here... you go send am go school. Wetin he go do here? Nothing. No fish for the river, nothing. I fear say soon him go join the militants, and I no want that" (Habla 39-40). While boys joined the militia in the 1980s, urbanization and industrialization prompted young girls, in particular, to relocate to cities in pursuit of better possibilities. In a flashback, the narrator goes back to Bar Beach in Lagos in the 1980s, when young females came to the city in search of opportunities. The majority of the women ended up as prostitutes in bars on the beach. The fortunate ones were pregnant and homeless on the streets, while the unfortunate ones perished and were found in the water days later. Others were raped, strangled, and stabbed to death (Habla 119).

Gas flares connected to oil exploitation have contributed to an ecological disaster in the Niger Delta that has a huge impact on the health of local people and wild animals. Flares discharge emissions into the atmosphere, contaminating the air and making it

dangerous for birds and bats to breathe. As Gloria says, "These islands used to be a big habitat for bats; now only a few dozen remain here and there" (Habla 127). She gestures to the distant sky, where the oil field's gas flares may be seen. They murdered them. Not just bats but also other flying creatures. As the narrator sits on the hill to gaze at the river, gas flares cover the land and community in soot and harm the vegetation: "The faraway gas flares that emerged suddenly from the pillar like pipes, hold up their roofs of odious black smoke" (Habla 139). Gas flaring, according to Raymond Anyadike, produces dense plumes of smoke that blacken roof tops and is a primary source of acid rain, which corrodes dwellings with zinc-based roofing. It has poisoned the air in many areas, and locals have little option but to drink and bathe in water tainted by acid rain and other contaminants. The community and militants have been asking for action against gas flaring as one of their critical grievances against the oil companies. Human health is likewise harmed by gas flares, just as animals are. People in the impacted areas suffer from water and air-related disorders as a result of the discharge of harmful substances into the air and water. The water is infected with bugs, and Zaq has dengue fever, which he caught from the water; "somewhere in these godforsaken waters, that's where he must have picked it up. There're plenty of bugs flourishing here... I suspect his liver is gone already. I've been in these waters for five years now, and I tell you a place is a dead place, a place for dying," the Doctor says of the sea (Habla 150-151). He, like Gloria, blames gas flares for the devastation: "he pointed at the faraway orange sky. – Those damned flares" (Habla 151).

In a flashback, the doctor takes us back to when oil was discovered two years after his arrival in the town. The villagers feasted for weeks until they received their orange fire, which was securely set over the lake at the village's edge. They burn all day and night, unaware of the risks that follow the constant flares. Years later, livestock started to die, and plant stems began to wither. When local people began to die, the doctor brought samples of the drinking water and blood to his lab, where he determined that the amount of poisons in the water was increasing. Many people were ill, and many died as a result of the same sickness (Habla 153). He attempted to educate oil workers and the government about the dangers hidden in the wells and the atmosphere. To his disappointment, the oil company offered him cash and a position if he would submit his findings to them, while the government congratulated him and filed the findings away without taking any concrete steps to enhance the people's situation. In his letter to Rufus, Dr Dagogo-Mark describes the difficulties that individuals in these industrial zones confront. He laments the reality that people in these places live in extreme poverty despite the abundance of oil and how corruption contributes to this suffering. He depicts Nigeria as being corrupt, with just a few people having access to the country's resources and the rest dying in poverty "You people could easily be the Japan of Africa, the USA of Africa," adds James Floode, "but the corruption is incredible" (Habla 103). The text reveals that the citizens live in the worst circumstances of any oil settlement on the planet. These petroleum companies do little to alleviate the situation in the host towns. The government, like its inhabitants, is unconcerned about their well-being. The impact of environmental contamination caused by oil company activity demonstrates that the future for teenagers is bleak. Conflicts and restiveness have become the sole means of voicing discontent in the region's oil-rich villages.

Apart from the injuries and health problems caused by illegal bunkering, gas flares, and oil spills, the most visible indication of the oil industry's detrimental influence on the region's inhabitants is violence as a form of resistance to capitalism. In this regard, Flender asserts that the story depicts a delta that looks to be "a war zone, where the military is in conflict with militants who sabotage oil production and kidnap foreigners for ransom" (521). The text provides a voice to both the warring aspects in this warlike condition, where it states, "there's more need for gravediggers than for a doctor" (Habla 154), owing to the many people seen by Rufus along his trip. Therefore, environmental degradation, poverty, and limited employment opportunities have contributed to the emergence of armed organizations in the region and are vital sources of young discontent. John and other unemployed youngsters "hang out in backstreet bar rooms to placards and drink all day, always complaining of the government...he has been full of anger that pushed him to join the militants" (Habla 95). Youths carrying Isabel Floode's picture and banners in front of an oil firm in Port Harcourt are featured on TV news, accompanied by a long, rote-like voice-over on poverty in Nigeria and how corruption nourishes it. The narrator finds reasons to understand their position and thus does not condemn them for destroying pipelines and sabotaging towns; "I don't blame them for wanting some benefit out of the pipelines that have brought nothing but suffering to their lives, leaking into the rivers and wells, killing the fish and poisoning the farmlands. And all they are told by the oil companies and the government is that the pipelines are there for their good, that they hold great potential for their country" (Habla 103).

The narrative portrays militancy as a kind of resistance and struggle for environmental conservation. Chief Malabo, a central figure in the struggle, and the people have refused to sell their property to oil companies. Villagers armed with bows, arrows, clubs, and guns drove away government officials, oil company executives, and politicians who tried to persuade them to sell their land to oil companies; "the villages decided to keep them away by sending out their own patrols over the surrounding rivers, in canoes, all armed with bows and arrows and clubs and a few guns" (Habla 43). The narrator states the unfortunate condition of Chief Malabo, who "was arrested, his hands tied behind his back as if he were a petty criminal, on charges of supporting the militants and plotting against the federal government and threatening to kidnap foreign oil workers" (Habla 44). He was later murdered and buried; "the oil company move in. They came with a whole army, waving guns and looking like they meant business" (Habla 44). They submitted a forged document signed by Chief Balabo while he was in prison, in which he sold his whole family's land to them. They generously

compensated locals who agreed to sell their property to him, "and that was where they'd start drilling...They sold. One by one. The rigs went up, and the gas flares and the workers came and set up their camp in our midst, we saw our village changed right before our eyes" (Habila 45). Chief Ibrahim describes how oil production fuelled militancy in the region. Their land was not only taken from them violently, but they also executed their leader, marched into their country with an army, and began drilling, altering the appearance of their community and bringing conflict. Villagers were forced to relocate in order to find a peaceful environment. In response to the narrator's inquiry, Chief Ibrahim says, "So your question, are we happy here? I say how can we be happy where we are mere wonderers without a home?" (Habila 45).

Though their actions may be justified, militant groups or eco-terrorists conduct acts of violence against the population and the environment they claim to preserve. Fighting occurs near pipelines, oil rigs, and refineries as a threat to the government's ability to meet their demands; "what was certain, though, was that they never strayed too far from the pipelines and oil rigs and refineries, which they constantly threatened to blow up, thereby ensuring for themselves a steady livelihood" (Habila 7). The Black Belts of Justice, the Free Delta Army, and the AK-47 Freedom Fighters are among the groups in the novel. They are made up of youths, criminals, and school dropouts like Ani Wilson, also known as Professor, a militant kingpin "who used to work for an oil company and one day became disgusted with the environmental abuse and became a militant to fight for change" (Habila 156). Despite the fact that the government refers to them as "rebels," "terrorists," and "kidnappers" rather than "freedom fighters" (Habila 156), one thing comes out: teenage restiveness, which has also become a serious problem in this area.

These criminal organizations' members rob, murder, and kidnap for ransom. This criminal crew includes Salomon, James Floode's chef, as well as his neighbour Basseyy and a police officer, Jamabo. They conspire to kidnap Isabel Floode in order to get revenge on her husband, James Floode, for impregnating Salomon's partner, Koko. According to Salomon, kidnapping is a "technical way of collecting payment for all the pains these people cause me, a refund for all my investment in Koko" (Habila 220). After all, the money for the ransom was still not coming from Floode's wallet; "the oil company always pays the ransom" (Habila 221). The ransom money, according to Basseyy, "comes from our oil, so we would be getting back what was ours in the first place" (Habila 220). As the Professor explains, violent groups like the Professor's and Henshaw's are for the people; "we are not barbarians as the government propagandists say we are. We are for the people. Everything we do is for the people. What will we gain if we terrorise them?" (Habila 232).

Although the professor acknowledges that there are criminal gangs, his declaration attests to the fact that they are freedom fighters who have the people's best interests at heart. He declares that "I am aware that criminal elements are looting and killing under the guise of freedom fighting, but we are different. Those kinds of insurgents are our enemies" (Habila 232). He emphasizes the importance of exposing the truth to the world and encourages Rufus to "write only the truth. Tell them about flares you see at night and the oil on the water. And the soldiers forcing us to escalate the violence every day. Tell them how they are hounded daily in our land. Where do they want us to go, tell me, where? Tell them we are going nowhere. This land belongs to us. That is the truth" (Habila 232). The Professor's strong words provide significance to the narrative and the causes of the conflict and kidnapping as an act against environmental exploitation. Recognizing the importance of journalistic investigations in society, he urges Rufus to write only the truth in order to enlighten and raise awareness about the region's environmental destruction. He reveals the origins of the oil conflict, thereby justifying the novel's title, *Oil on Water*.

Similarly, Henshaw, a militant in military captivity, corroborates the professor's point of view by exposing the greater backdrop of the ongoing struggle. He, like the professor, provides arguments for the government's war; "we are the people, we are the Delta, we represent the very earth on which we stand," he says emphatically (Habila 163). The Professor declares, "I will not stop fighting till I achieve my goal. I tell you, the war is just starting. We will make it hot for the government and the oil company that they will be forced to pull out. By this time tomorrow, one of the major oil deposits will be burning. I want you to write about it" (Habila 231). Their viewpoint is similar to that of Chief Malabo, another central figure in the resistance. Oil is portrayed as a shared legacy from which everyone must benefit. Rather than enriching the people, it results in a battle that devastates the environment. Whatever the reasons for the oil war, the village is trapped in the middle of the conflict between militants and the military, and it bears the weight of the conflict. Animals are slaughtered; "They just shot goats, dogs, and chickens like that" (Habila 224). Arrests made without cause, violence, looting, killings, and kidnappings committed in the name of freedom contribute to environmental destruction.

In the same context, two reporters, Max Tekena and Peter Olisah, and a Filipino captive were shot by militants when the Filipino contractor tried to flee, while Karibi, an influential figure in the community, was detained by the military for fraternizing with the militants on suspicion of being militants. Rufus, the narrator, Zak, the fisherman, and his son are all imprisoned. The Major pours fuel on them as they are on their knees, saying, "You can't stand the smell of oil? Isn't it what you fight for, kill for? Go on, enjoy. By the time I'm through with you, you'll hate the smell of it; you won't take money that comes from oil, you won't get in a car because it runs on petrol. You'll hate the very name petrol" (Habila 61), as these harsh words prove the pain inside these captives

and expose the horribleness of war on the environment. On the other hand, if Rufus insists on their innocence, the Major threatens to kill him; "you insist! I can shoot you right now and throw you into the swamps, and that's it. Do you know what is going out there? There is a war going on! People are being shot, oil companies are being bombed" (Habla 64). Expatriates and locals are taken for ransom, including "a seventy-year-old woman and a three-year-old girl were kidnapped" (Habla 31) and Isabel Floode, the wife of a British petroleum engineer, whose kidnapping is the plot's leading influencer. Hence, *Oil on Water* depicts the environmental devastation and social collapse caused by the oil companies' practices. The novel reveals the degradation of the Niger Delta's social structures and ecology by neocolonial powers who have no consideration for mankind or nature.

### 4.3 Results

Industrialized economies increased at an average rate of about 5% per year, providing prosperity to many inhabitants of established industrial nations and those in other regions of the world where economic modernization was more recent (Kim et al. 43). Thus, the growing development ideology was based on the notion that further development was a global economic incentive that "a rising tide lifts all boats," notwithstanding the disparities that could arise. In other words, it was projected from the beginning of the development movement that market-based policies would worsen inequality but that the overall quality of life would increase. Neoliberals advanced an optimistic conception of the market, as Shakow and Irwin explain, "the mechanisms of which, if allowed to operate unfettered, purportedly would lead to optimal outcomes for society as a whole." (Kim et al. 44). Therefore, this chapter draws on the discourse of development as conceptualized in the works of Wolfgang Sachs, Escobar, and Huggan and Tiffin to negotiate the repercussions of this ideology in *The Whale Caller* and *Oil on Water*.

The worldwide development debate, as the German sociologist Sachs describes it, has tended to mirror the rise and collapse of political sensibilities inside the affluent northern nations, notably the United States. In this regard, Sachs reveals that development is a form of strategic kindness in which technical and financial assistance from the first world is geared to its own economic and political concerns. Furthermore, the most radical version of this viewpoint holds that progress is nothing more than a myth created by the West under the guise of modernisation in order to re-establish the same social, political, and economic divide that it claims to seek to repair. Much like Sachs, Escobar discusses whether development is a myth; it is indeed a historically created discourse which runs a representational regime aimed at reinforcing the Western world's social, cultural, and political control in a postcolonial world (6). Therefore, this myth supports a capitalist development model that is manifestly uneven and has the potential to harm the environment.

Simultaneously, Escobar demonstrates that Western politicians' and academics' ambition of materially and economically transforming undeveloped nations into mirror versions of Western society has failed. Escobar attributes this attitude toward development to a Western worldview that has come to embrace development as a natural result of the progression of society from simple agricultural to more sophisticated industrial forms of production. Development, particularly industrial development, is seen as the ultimate form of evolution that nations worldwide must achieve to escape the inhumane state of underdevelopment. An attempt has been made to promote progress due to historical discourse (6). This discussion seeks to explain why some nations consider themselves undeveloped and attempt to develop through systematic and planned development efforts. North American and Western European governments and scholars contributed to this debate by viewing the world's largest agricultural and pre-industrial societies as undeveloped countries needing immediate assistance for material and cultural progression. The perceptions of this group shaped a new conceptual environment in which the notion of development and techniques for dealing with backwardness was formed.

Development, according to Huggan and Tiffin, is "part of arguments about the social as well as economic benefits of a world market system that is not necessarily antithetical to human equality or rides roughshod over local human and environmental interests in order to secure preferential conditions for international trade" (32). Both argue that modern development theories and practices are part of a well-intentioned effort to repair the damage done by colonialism by assisting in the creation of more beneficial economic and political conditions that might allow historically marginalized and/or exploited peoples to work toward building their own future while consolidating their own individual and collective human rights (32). On the other hand, Escobar asserts that there is a link between the end of colonialism in the Third World and the creation of the development discourse. Many regard it as a restructuring of relations between formerly colonized nations and the colonizers in order for European and North American powers to maintain control over these newly independent countries. One strategy was to modernize local inhabitants with the support of finance, technology, and development experts, which eventually resulted in the demise of indigenous social norms.

In Escobar's suggestion, underdeveloped countries would require finance and technology from developed ones in order to achieve material development. Indeed, capital and technology would be transferred under the supervision of Western governments and development agencies (8). Moreover, the discourse of development is defined by these concepts, theories, and practices, which are its features as a coherent whole and give them legitimacy by establishing these connections. As a settlement, Escobar believes



that there are a variety of ways that may be used to address the topic of alternatives to the existing development discourse with resistance movements that have repeatedly voiced disagreement with the hegemonic development paradigm (143). Therefore, creating ethnographies of the influence of development rhetoric and the hybrid culture that forms inside specific locales, in his opinion, may give valuable information about where these communities stand on the cultural scale in relation to development. In the end, Escobar believes that the best way to understand alternatives as a research subject and social activity is to look at the particular situations in which they arise (146). To put it another way, the alternatives already exist, but they must be interpreted differently than present practice, which has ignored cultural distinctions and hybrid forms that arise as a result of contact with modernity and development.

In *The Whale Caller*, the narrative describes the situation in South Africa before and after independence. It elucidates the complexities of various environmental issues in light of global economic and political concerns. It negotiates with the discourse of development not through the establishment of markets or multinational corporations to use cheap labour, nor through financial support from monetary organizations, but rather through mass tourism, which is a contradictory operation that brings ecological crisis to the area in the name of development. For instance, grape-wine plantations and the ostrich feather industry in colonial times, beach pollution, abalone threats of extinction and danger to sea animals because of the industry of tourism are all valuable evidence of the myth of development. On the other hand, Nigeria, as an underdeveloped country but rich in natural resources, is also exposed to the notion of paradoxical development, which is portrayed through the narrative of *Oil on Water*. Whereas Shell Petroleum Development Company was established in Nigeria to aid the Western market despite all the damage done to indigenous people's farmland and fishing waters by the huge oil conglomerate on the delta river, as portrayed in *Oil on Water*. Huggan and Tiffin describe the situation in Nigeria as an ecological war waged against Nigerian-based multinational oil companies, particularly Shell and Chevron, and a political war aimed at systematically depriving the Nigerian people of their fundamental human rights and locally generated wealth (37). As a result, the representations of environmental degradation in the two novels reveal the inconsistencies inherent in the discourse of development, which has failed to create sustainable development and endangered the natural resources of the land.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study has explored environmental degradation in Africa and the economic activities influenced by colonialism, which still negatively affect the idea of sustainable development in both South Africa and Nigeria. In this regard, African Literary Environmentalism presents a new way of viewing contemporary African novels as environmental guidelines. Both novelists used a variety of narrative techniques to elicit empathy from the reader as a spectator of colonial violence, which is responsible for the traumatic consequences of contemporary African communities.

*The Whale Caller* demonstrates how tourism in South Africa provides a lens through which to evaluate and analyze a number of ecological issues regarding humans and animals. It also highlights the ways that poverty and government land acquisition pose a danger to environmental conservation. The narrative emphasizes how global commerce and technology have disrupted rural places. In a reaction to today's technologically driven tourism industry, *The Whale Caller* dismisses the present as the days of engine-powered trawlers, which are to blame for the devastation of Sharisha and, by extension, the natural home of the whales. Similarly, *Oil on Water* provides a voice to the destroyed land in order to demand immediate action to prevent any more devastation caused by indiscriminate oil extraction. In the text, the Nigerian government continues to rely on the military to silence local people's protesting voices, but it can't do much about the desecrated rivers' suffering. Despite public awareness and the promise of a large clean-up, many towns still lack electricity and basic utilities, and fishing and farming in many contaminated regions are difficult.

The two texts indirectly reconcile that development is profoundly political in terms of agenda, rhetoric, and practice. It is also clear from the module that a phenomenon as political as development is apolitical and projected as scientific, technical, and neutral through the development discourse to mute any challenge that might be posed to the transfer of causation in areas of the world that they have designated as underdeveloped. Moreover, the critique of development highlights the persistent failures of this type of interventionism and demonstrates why, despite these failures, the knowledge produced by the development discourse and the practices it generates continue to be promoted as legitimate and true due to the political nature of development. However, academics and eco-activists are challenging the existing development paradigm, as are resistance organizations in developing countries, who have taken the lead in criticizing what they see as an attempt to impose Western knowledge, practices, and customs on local ones. While recommendations for alternatives to the current development paradigm suggest that power be transferred to locals so that they can decide how best to respond to the invasion of modernity and development in their regions, these need to be researched and analysed further in terms of the implications for development discourse and practice, on the one hand, and for local communities, on the other.

This study attempted to demonstrate why a postcolonial ecocritical perspective on capitalism is critical in light of the urgent need for cultural, social, and economic reform. As such, this literary genre provides examples that help readers understand how Western modernity has always taken advantage of the separation between the concepts of culture and nature, whereby the natural environment as an empirical reality has been made to serve human interests. Consequently, it is vital to consider literature as a valuable tool that operates both inside and outside of larger cultural discourses, opening up an imaginative space in which dominant developments, beliefs, truth claims, and models of human life are critically reflected and symbolically transgressed in counter-discourses to the prevailing economic-technological forms of modernization and globalization. This research, however, is subject to several limitations. Due to time constraints, there are some relevant publications that may contribute to the discourse of development that I could not tackle, among them the recent work of Aram Ziai. Hence, since there are few research papers in this regard, I hope that future researchers tackle the historical themes of postcolonial ecocritical studies, as enumerated here and elsewhere, to expose and negotiate these issues by exploring neocolonial ideology and uneven development as presented in literary works.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Acknowledgements:** I'd like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Dr Samar H. AlJahdali, whose thoughtful insights, support, and encouragement throughout the process have been invaluable.

**ORCID iD:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8294-8791>

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

## References

- [1] Abianji-Menang, O. (2021). WAR FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN HELON HABILA'S OIL ON WATER. *Chiefwww.Epitomejournals.Com*. 7. <http://www.epitomejournals.com>.
- [2] Agofure, J. (2018). Natural and Imagined Ecologies: An Ecocritical Study of Helon Habila's Oil on Water and Ben Okri's Stars of the New Curfew.
- [3] Ayide, A. (2020). Man and Nature in Zake Mda's The Whale Caller: An Ecocrit-Ical Perspective. <http://www.conferencesseries.com/eco->
- [4] Bartosch, R. (2013). *EnvironMentality: ecocriticism and the event of postcolonial fiction*. Amsterdam: Rodopi
- [5] Beinart, W, & Hughes, L. (2007). *Environment and Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [6] Boonpromkul, P.(2016). A Postcolonial Ecocritical Reading of Zakes Mda's The Whale Caller.
- [7] Buell, L. (1995). *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Harvard University Press.
- [8] Chernoh, B. (2017). *Neocolonialism in West Africa: A Collection of Essays and Articles*. Africanist Press.
- [9] Carrigan, A. (2012). *Postcolonial tourism: literature, culture, and environment*. 1st ed. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203832097>
- [10] Crosby, A. (1986). *Ecological imperialism: the biological expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [11] Donsomsakulkij, W. (2014). When the Whale Talks Back: An Interspecies Cultural Dialogue in Zakes Mda's The Whale Caller. 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.22492/2186-2281.20140120>
- [12] Egya, S. (2017). Literary Militancy and Helon Habila's Oil on Water. *Research in African Literatures* 48 (4): 94–104. <https://doi.org/10.2979/reseafriLite.48.4.07>.
- [13] Escobar, A. (2012). *Encountering development: the making and unmaking of the third world*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- [14] Estreicher, S. (2014). A Brief History of Wine in South Africa. *European Review*. 22 (3): 504-537.
- [15] Feldbrügge, A. (2010). The Human and the Non-Human World in Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness and The Whale Caller. *In Local Natures, Global Responsibilities*, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789042028135\\_012](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789042028135_012)
- [16] Feldner, M. (2018). Representing the Neocolonial Destruction of the Niger Delta: Helon Habila's Oil on Water. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 54 (4): 515–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2018.1451358>
- [17] Ghosh, A (2016). *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press.
- [18] Glotfelty, C, & Fromm, H. (1996). *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press.
- [19] Goodman, R. (2008). The Man, the Woman and the Whale: Exploring the Politics of the Possible in Zakes Mda's the Whale Caller. *Current Writing* 20 (1): 105–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1013929X.2008.9678292>.
- [20] Habila, H. & Adunbi, O. (2010) The Alignist Q&A on Nigeria. *Youtube, uploaded by The Alignist*, 23 July. 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1E7mhwCzUWA>
- [21] Habila, H. (2010). *Oil on water*. London, England: Hamish Hamilton, an imprint of Penguin Books.
- [22] Hand, F. (2021). We Are the Delta': Nature and Agency in Helon Habila's Oil on Water. *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment* 12 (1): 107–20. <https://doi.org/10.37536/ecoazona.2021.12.1.3556>.
- [23] Huggan, G. & Helen, T. (2015). *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment. Postcolonial Ecocriticism*. Second. Routledge.
- [24] Idakwo, O. (2020). DISCARDING EMPATHY FOR THE OTHER IN DANGAREMBGA ' S NERVOUS CONDITIONS AND HABILA ' S OIL ON WATER. *International Conference on Education and Social Sciences*, 1328–34.
- [25] Kerridge, R. & Sammells, N. (1998). *Writing the environment: ecocriticism and literature*. London: Zed Books.
- [26] Mahato, S. (2018). Relocating Animal in the Trope of Wilderness: A Comparative Study of Bear and The Whale CallerTitle. *Glocal Colloquies* 4: 181–88.

- [27] Malaza, K. (2004). Protected area management and environmental decision-making: the case of Dlinza Forest Nature Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal.
- [28] Mda, Z. (2005). *The Whale Caller*. Penguin Books South Africa
- [29] Nixon, R. (2005) *Environmentalism and Postcolonialism* In *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* edited by Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton, and Jed Esty, 235. New York, USA: Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822386650-012>
- [30] Ojedoja, S, & Abubakar, A. (2018). Foreign Exploitation of Tourism in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* and *The Whale Caller*. *AFRREV LALIGENS: An International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies* 7 (2): 85. <https://doi.org/10.4314/laligens.v7i2.8>
- [31] Pirzadeh, S. (2021). Neoliberal Capitalism and Aquatic Resistance in Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*. 57 (4): 1–17.
- [32] Price, J. (2017). Ways of Desiring: Postcolonial Affect in Zakes Mda's *The Whale Caller*. *Configurations* 25, no. 1: 57-88. doi:10.1353/con.2017.0002.
- [33] Reser, J. (2007). Psychology and the natural environment. The Australian Psychological Society, July 16 2016. <https://www.psychology.org>
- [34] Rogerson, C. (2002). Driving developmental tourism in South Africa. *Africa insight* 32-42.
- [35] Rueckert, W. (1978). Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism. in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. edited by Glotfelty, Cheryl and Harold Fromm, 104-123. London: University of Georgia Press.
- [36] Sachs, W. (1992). *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge As Power*. London: Zed Books. Print.
- [37] Samuelson, M. (2013). Sea Changes, Dark Tides and Littoral States: Oceans and Coastlines in Post-Apartheid South African Narratives. *Alternation* 6: 9–28.
- [38] Stanley, B, & Walter, P. (2017). *South African Ecocriticism: Landscapes, Animals, and Environmental Justice*. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935338.013.154>
- [39] Tyson, L. (2014). *Critical Theory Today*. 3rd ed. London, England: Routledge.
- [40] Idakwo, O & Ogunpitan, S. (2019). Postcolonial Trauma and Environmental Despoliation in Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*. <https://doi.org/10.20370/zw2h-yd35>
- [41] Watts, M. J. (1999). Petro-Violence: Some Thoughts on Community, Extraction, and Political Ecology. *UC Berkeley: Institute of International Studies*. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7zh116zd>
- [42] Zapf, H. (2016) *Literature as Cultural Ecology: Sustainable Texts*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. Environmental Cultures. *Bloomsbury Collections*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781474274685>