LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

THE SUBALTERN CAN SPEAK: INTERROGATING NARRATIVES OF EXPLOITATION IN KAINE AGARY'S *YELLOW YELLOW*

Hani Hani
Department of English Language and Literature,
Graduate School of Social Sciences,
Atilim University, Ankara, Turkey
Email: shahibaloch90@gmail.com

Abstract

Imperial incursion into most countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and so on have been contextualized, re-contextualized, and aggregated in strongly evocative linguistic terms. Arising from that background are such terms as "subaltern", "postcolonial", and so on. Many disciplines have appropriated this omnibus structure in their advancement of knowledge. Literary studies draws from this composite structure in its mediation on this existential condition. This is where subaltern literature comes into play. Subaltern literature has consistently portrayed colonial encounter or the aftermath of colonial encounter. It is categorized as postcolonial literature. It often speaks back to the former colonial masters; although Spivak in her seminal essay posits that the subaltern cannot speak. Her assertion is predicated on many stifling conditions the subaltern face. Mindful of Spivak's position, this paper argues that the subaltern can speak, irrespective of how they speak and when they speak. In the current study, they speak of multiple exploitation of: the colonial / postcolonial space, the subaltern population, and ultimately the women subaltern. This study, through the postcolonial theory, interrogates the different shades of exploitation represented in Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow*. The discovery is that both women and the environment in the text are victims of exploitative colonial, postcolonial and patriarchal structures.

Key words: Subaltern, Narratives of exploitation, Postcolonial literature, *Yellow Yellow*, Kaine Agary.

Introduction

The experiences of the former colonies of the Western imperial powers were in relative obscurity within the colonial period, and in the early years of their freedom from colonial rule. This was largely because their stories were often told by "outsiders", in most cases, by the same imperial powers.

LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

These former colonies were diminished and relegated to the background as they struggled with the shadows of their repression which eternally hang around them. Decades after their independence, they still cut an image of the downtrodden, the voiceless, the ordinary and the marginalized. They are what the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci calls the subaltern and are dominantly found among the former colonies. Gramsci underscores the fact that the narratives involving these set of humans will always be subsumed in the narratives involving their imperial masters. It it under this background that Gayatric Spivak throws up her 1988 publication which raised fundamental postcolonial question, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Mindful of Spivak's position that the subaltern cannot speak within certain colonial/postcolonial contexts, given that the poorest and most marginalized in colonial/postcolonial societies do not have platforms that echo their voices and translate them into influential voices. We argue that the subaltern can also speak within the same contexts, irrespective of how they speak, when they speak and to whom they speak. In the current study, they speak of their exploitation through narratives recollected in female voices within a postcolonial setting. The Nigerian author, Kaine Agary found the literary form a strong platform and a tool to argue for the subaltern, especially the women subaltern. She portrays in her novel, *Yellow Yellow* two layers of exploitation: exploitation of women and exploitation of the environment.

In a 2011 interview, Agary avers that her novel, *Yellow Yellow,* which incidentally is her first novel, was a product of her efforts to tell the Niger Delta story from a female perspective. She says, "I wanted to tell the Niger Delta story with a female voice, from the female perspective. At the time, most of the voices coming out of the Niger Delta were male voices and expectedly, the women's issues were rarely in contemplation" (Gyasi 2). Agary's position is apt; it needs a woman to graphically capture the waves and fluctuationsriddled in the experiences and stories of subaltern women. *Yellow Yellow* was published in 2006 and narrates the lives of servitude and squalor which women are subjected to in the squalid Niger Delta. The plot is driven by Zilayefa, the protagonist and her mother, Bibi. The Niger Delta is representative of colonial exploitation while Zilayefa, Bibi and other women are representatives of the victims of both colonial exploitation and patriarchal structures; structures of exploitation and repression. Zilayefa is a product of an exploitative patriarch who got Bibi pregnant and abandoned her. Bibi bore the excruciating pains of her pregnancy, subsequently giving

LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

birth to Zilayefa and also passing through the trauma of raising her as a single mother. Zilayefa on her own is further exploited by Admiral Ken who sexually and emotionally exploited her and thereafter abandoned her. Zilayefa is of mixed race, having a Nigerian mother and a Greek father. Although she does not know her father but she has internalized the story that a certain man impregnated her mother after having an affair with her. This experience is a negative one on the parts of both mother and daughter. From her squalid village, Zilayefa moves to the city of Port Harcourt where she lives with an aged woman known as Sisi. Sisi's old friend, who is called Admiral, finds Zilayefa's presence in Sisi's house and her naivety an opportunity to exploit her. Admiral did exploit her as he got her pregnant and refused to take responsibility for the pregnancy which propelled Zilayefa to abort the pregnancy. Zilayefa gradually drifted into prostitution, the prevalent phenomenon among young girls who have been bruised by poverty, and who struggle to get out of poverty at all cost.

This paper, through the postcolonial discourse theory, interrogates the representation of subaltern experience in a postcolonial context, with extrapolations from Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow.* The realities of women subaltern receive greater focus; the socio-economic environment that exacerbated women's repression is also interrogated. The interconnection and ideological commonalities between exploitation of women and exploitation of the environment are reviewed in the light of ecofeminist principles. The paper is structured into six parts: the first is the introduction. This is followed by the conceptual framework where the concept of "subaltern" is accounted for. Following that is the theoretical background that explained the theoretical framework. There is a section that discusses structures of exploitation in the novel under study. That section is followed by another section that focuses on ecofeminism where the exploitation of women and exploitation of the environment are discussed as mutually reinforcing factors. That is followed by the conclusion.

Conceptual Framework

This paper is not essentially a reaction to Gayatric Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak?* but an attempt to interrogate the voices of the subaltern in Kaine Agary's strands of narratives embodied in her novel, *Yellow Yellow*. It largely references Spivak's important essay by asserting that the subaltern can also speak. "The subaltern" therefore is the conceptual

LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

fulcrum of the paper which portrays the throbbing, trauma, tendentious repression and ultimately, the exploitation of a former colony of an imperial power. It reflects on the burden of (neo) colonialism, a story which only the colonized appear to have eternal legitimacy to a truthful account. The imperialists, who within the consciousness of the colonized largely exist as invaders, have their own versions in the body of narratives relating to the empires and their colonies. It is doubtful if these imperial narratives will ever represent the experiences of the victims of colonial invasions.

The Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci consolidates the notion of "the subaltern" as it is presently used in many disciplines. El Habib Louai observes that "the subaltern classes refer fundamentally in Gramsci"s words to any "low rank" person or group of people in a particular society suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation" (5). We argue that these former colonies are not inherently "subaltern" but found themselves in conditions where the realities of their existence interconnect with those features that have been ascribed to that which is "subaltern". These conditions are not natural but evolved through a social framework of power relations that reinforced colonial structures of dominance. The foregoing, irresistibly pushed the subaltern to the margin, making the history of the subaltern to be " intertwined with that of civil society" (Gramsci, 1971). Louai further observes that "the concept of the subaltern moved to a further more complex theoretical debate with the intervention of the Indian-American post-colonial feminist critic, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who was criticized in her groundbreaking essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988)" (6).This is obviously one of Spivak's contributions to subaltern studies.

Drawing from Foucault's and Deleuze's suppositions, Spivak acknowledges that "the oppressed, if given the chance, *can speak and know their conditions*" (78). This appears a heterogeneous correlation to her final position that "the subaltern cannot speak" and goes on to assert that "the female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish" (104). Spivak's "circumscribed role for female intellectual" is part of the repressive structures designed against women, making women both victims of colonial aggression and victims of patriarchy. The implication is that even among the subaltern, women are

LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

unapologetically marginalized, echoing "gendered subaltern", which emphasizes the double oppression of women by colonialism especially in the third world countries (Das, 2007). Spivak posits that the question of whether the subaltern can speak must be confronted, taking into account "the other side of the international division of labor from socialized capital, inside *and* outside the circuit of the epistemic violence of imperialistic law and education supplementing an earlier economic text, *can the subaltern speak?*"Spivak's frame of references are important considerations in determining the texture and temper of social relations in a Neo-colonial context as in the case of postcolonial territories, but appear defective in gagging the subaltern from speaking their experiences.

Ranajit Guha, the progenitor of the Asian-based Subaltern Studies Group, one of the foremost groups dedicated to the advancement of subaltern studies, views Subaltern Studies as "a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way" (Guha, 1982). Guha uses a segment of the Asian continent as a springboard to classify subordination and instances of subordination which he aggregated into what he argues is "Subaltern Studies". For Guha, any experience of subordination in any form is fundamentally a subaltern issue. Bhaskor Chandra Dutta (2021) echoes Guha's thought process on the concept of "subaltern". For Dutta, "empirically, subaltern implies peasants. structurally, it represents the insurgent and marginalized while de-constructively, it personifies inferior groups of third world countries" (69). The concept of "subaltern" obviously has evolved to represent many things but the common denominator centres on its capacity to reflect the identities of social groups who are at the margins of social existence. We have used it to portray the victims of aggressive exploitation, subordination, and their reactions to their experiences in a postcolonial setting.

Theoretical Background

The theoretical framework of this study is post-colonial discourse theory. Postcolonial theory became prominent in the 1970s with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism.* For Said, "orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident" " (2). Marandi and Shabanirad (2015) observe that:

LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

> Edward Said's groundbreaking text, *Orientalism* is a contrapuntal reading of imperial discourse about the non-Western Other. It indicates that the Western intellectual is in the service of the hegemonic culture. In this influential text, Said shows how imperial and colonial hegemony is implicated in discursive and textual production. Orientalism is a critique of Western texts that have represented the East as an exotic and inferior other and construct the Orient by a set of recurring stereotypical images and clichés. Said's analysis of Orientalism shows the negative stereotypes or images of native women as well. (22)

The incidence of imperialist incursion into Asian, African and south American countries was motivated by an expansionist ideology and led to the annexation of nations and countries as European colonies. By so doing, centre – margin relationship was established, a relationship of control by the centre over the margins. This encounter ignited a sense of "other", (imperialists' understanding of the margins). The imperialists' cultures substantially and obviously influenced local traditions and cultures, reflecting in religion, education, language, and so on. Postcolonialism is essentially a site for the study of these influences and their effects on the cultures of the margins, the subalterns. For Pramod K. Nayar:

> The 'postcolonial' as a term has to undergo significant semantic expansion to include ethnic studies, minority studies, African American, Caribbean, South American, 'Third World' studies: writings of and by people who have been dominated by white, Euro-American cultures, and explore the various modalities of power, identity, objectivity as informed by race, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexual preference…postcolonial writing is perceived as the attempt at the retrieval of local, native, and particular histories freed – as much as it is possible – from Euro-American 'versions' of the same… a literature that critically engages with a history of oppression, colonialism (both external and internal), racism, and injustice… it is a literature of emancipation… (xiii - xiv)

LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

The notion of postcolonial literature embodies literature relating to the former colonies of the imperial powers, largely the British empire. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (2002), edited by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, laid the foundation for the term "post-colonial" within the context of literary studies. They conclude that "we use the term 'post-colonial', however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day". (2) Postcolonial theory is a critical and analytical approach in literary studies. It is used to interpret the literature produced by countries that were once colonized or are still under any form of colonial rule. Literature written by the colonizers can also be interpreted within the framework of postcolonial theory if such literature takes up the former colonies/colonies as subjects. Essentially, postcolonial literature exists within the corridors of former colonial masters/subjects and/or colonial masters/subjects. It is largely about the colonies, whether former or subsisting. The effects of imperial incursion on these cultures still subsist, and are contained in literary art emanating from these climes. Issues of repression, exploitation, hybridity, identity, and so on are often prominent structural framework in postcolonial writings. Rukundwa and Aarde (2017) observe that "postcolonial theory provides a means of defiance by which any exploitative and discriminative practices, regardless of time and space, can be challenged" (1171). The colonized will never cease to recount the repressive and exploitative inclinations of the colonizers while also facing hybridization and identity questions. In hybridization, the cultures of both the colonized and the colonizers interlock in manners of both mutual and aggressive influences, giving birth to new cultural forms. The colonized are always the worst for it because their cultural milieu provided a site for such encounter. The huge consequence is the evolution of dual consciousness arising from contacts with more than one culture. This reinforces identity crisis on the part of the colonized.

Through postcolonial literature, the colonies or former colonies write back to the imperial powers and give a voice to their seemingly voiceless and less powerful regions. Louai asserts that "one may go further to assume that the whole discourse of post-colonial theory itself is to be considered as a speaking for the voiceless and politically marginalized groups by their intellectual representatives" (7). This is where Agary essentially fits in as she symbolically represents the voiceless, the marginalized and the women subaltern. She speaks for a part of Nigeria that has been marginalized since

LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

colonial rule; she speaks for the Niger Delta women in particular and the Nigerian women in general, the "gendered subaltern" who are at the same time the victims of colonial / postcolonial forces, reinforcing "double oppression of women" (Das, 2007).In what appears an intersection of the concepts of "subalternity" and "post-coloniality", Spivak argues that "in postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern" (4). This makes the subaltern phenomenon a postcolonial issue as postcolonial criticism "bears witness to the unequal and universal forces of cultural representation".(Bhabha,171)

Structures of Exploitation in the Novel

Colonial presence deteriorated the Niger Delta which in turn deteriorated the condition of women therein. The novel opens with Zilayefa describing her childhood experience as she watched her environment badly exploited. She narrates:

> During my second to last year in secondary school, one of the crude oil pipes that ran through my village broke and spilled oil over several hectares of land, my mother's farm included. I was at home that day when she returned shortly after leaving for the farm. When she got to the house, she knocked on the door and said very coldly, "Zilayefa, bring me my bathing soap and sponge." As I was wondering why she needed them, I saw that her legs were stained black… And so it was that, in a single day, my mother lost her main source of sustenance. However, I think she had lost that land a long time ago, because each season yielded less than the season before. (3 - 4)

Zilayefa's mother, Bibi, is exploited on all fronts and on all counts. First, it was a Greek sailor(a symbol of colonial exploitative and parasitic interest) who made her an unwed mother and abandoned her; later it was the colonial capitalist structures which extracted the oil resources in her land and thereafter ruined the land. Bibi finds herself in contrived circumstances that physically and emotionally weigh her down, and Zilayefa acknowledges it and says, "the day my mother's farmland was overrun by crude oil was the day her dream for me started to wither, but she carried on watering it with hope". (10) Bibi's sublime faith in Zilayefa and her hope that Zilayefa would accomplish the much she has failed to achieve are

LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

threatened by their saddening social condition, and Zilayefa observes that: "farming and fishing, the occupation that had sustained my mother, and her mother's mother no longer provided gain" (40). These rays of hopelessness on their side, have continued to overshadow promises of hope.

Extrapolations from the foregoing are sufficient to conclude that there are two layers of exploitation represented in the text: exploitation of the environment and exploitation of women whom are "victims of vulgarity and immorality" (Nathaniel, 2017: p.284). The two reinforce each other and women are the worst for it. Bibi is physically exploited and served only as a sex object to the Greek sailor who found warmth in her body. Bibi's hope that the amorous affair would translate to marital bliss crashed when she was jilted. She found succour in farming in her remote village but unfortunately makes no progress in it as her farmland was gradually denuded and her farm subsequently destroyed. She has not had any respite from the fangs of the marauding forces that appeared to have conspired to distort her existence. Any effort she makes to rise above her depressing realities ignites suppression and forces of repression. In describing the earliest circumstances that altered Bibi's visions of hope, the protagonist-narrator who incidentally is her daughter notes:

> "Yellow-Yellow." That is what most people in my village called me because of my complexion, the product of a Greek father and an Ijaw mother. My father was a sailor whose ship had docked briefly in Nigeria about one year before I was born. After months at sea, he was just happy to see a woman and would have told her anything to have her company. The woman he chose was my mother, a young and naive eighteen-year-old who had just moved to Port Harcourt from her small village with visions of instant prosperity (7).

The narrator describing her mother as young and naive evokes the image of one who is incapable of making critical decisions that will shape her future in the midst of social pressures. In her brief romantic adventure that ultimately tainted her marital status, she appears to have acted from a position of ignorance rather than from a position of knowledge. The fate that befalls her mother is the same fate she wrestles with; she walked along the same drab and slippery paths that have been consciously or

LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

unconsciously designed to pull them down. Zilayefa, too, was young and naive at the time she decided to frontally confront the realities of her existence. She decides to leave her village for the city in order to brighten her future. Her mother is not in the know of her plan; a dangerous plan borne out of frustrations, yet a vision of hope. Zilayefa narrates, "I figured it would be easy to slip away from my mother's watchful eyes and meet that special someone who would save me from certain death in my claustrophobic village…I did not want anyone to know of my plans, especially my mother. I could not allow myself to think about how she would react if she found out." (17-18) For Zilayefa to comprehend that her continuous stay in the village tantamounts to "certain death" forecloses any thought or contemplation to stay behind in the village and toe the paths being charted for her by her mother. Her plans for herself are already in conflict with her mother's plans for her, although the two have a converging point; they are all embodied in the quest to rise above their subsisting conditions. Zilayefa would rather slip into the hands of an unknown "special someone" than stay back in the village.

Zilayefa's intense quest for a brighter future predisposes her to unbridled embrace of anyone willing to help her. This is why she easily falls for Sergio, a Spanish who visited her village to attend the burial of a brother to his business associate. At just a slight attention given to Zilayefa, she says of Sergio, "In my juvenile mind, I thought he would come to me and fall desperately in love with me and rescue me from my colourless existence." (21) To be rescued from what Zilayefa calls her "colourless existence" appears to be the intent and purpose guiding her actions and inaction, especially at that moment of significant departure from the paths both her and her mother previously walked. Zilayefa's case is similar to those of other girls in her environment in one or many ways. The circumstances surrounding her birth are similar to the circumstances surrounding Emem's birth. Emem is a product of an affair between a local woman and a Portuguese trader.

The respite Zilayefa earnestly seeks is a dangerous one, and such is the respite most of the young girls have found, an escape from the drudgery and suffocating village life into the dangerously exciting world of whores. The expatriate oil workers known as "whiteys" often tickle the fancy of these young girls. This is largely because the "whiteys" are wealthier and would always spend much to get sexual satisfactions from the young ladies.

LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

Such sexual satisfactions are sometimes a sight of horror. Some crazy "whiteys" can beat up the vulnerable young girls and some had"pushed objects like bottles into their privates as part of the fun" (37). The local boys do not spare these young girls. The invasion of their abodes and stealing of their monies by the boys are frequent occurrences. Through these incidents, Agary aptly exposes the world of prostitution where women are victims. She portrays the various structures of exploitation women are subjected to in the Niger Delta whose natural environment is also exploited

The Ecofeminist Vision

Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow* underscores the ecofeminist vision that seeks to highlight the exploitation of the environment and exploitation of women as issues that reinforce each other, "connections between the domination and oppression of women and domination and exploitation of nature by masculinist methods and attitudes" (Kaur, 190). Agary, in portraying the exploitation of women, conversely portrayed the exploitation of the environment. These shades of exploitation are products of colonial and patriarchal structures. Bibi, Zilayefa, Ebiere, Emem, and so on are representatives of the women who are in the throes of an exploitative patriarchy while Zilayefa's village and other adjoining villages destroyed by oil extraction are representatives of the environment that has been exploited. The ideology that propels the exploitation of these women is in tandem with the ideology that fuels the exploitation of their environment. Their environment has been badly exploited and their sources of livelihood are irredeemably compromised by colonial / postcolonial capitalist interest in oil exploration and extraction within the region. Akinsete observes in this direction that:

> from the perspective of eco-feminism, it may be argued that the Niger Delta women are among the most vulnerable victims of environmental degradation across the globe whose experiences, individual or collective, have hitherto been silenced, with devastating effects. They suffer from double oppression: firstly, as victims of male oppression exerted through traditional socio-cultural practices and secondly, as immediate victims of environmental pollution because their livelihoods as farmers and fisherwomen mean that they wholly depend on the land, which is itself under threat from sustained pollution and degradation.

LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

The state of the environment is no different from the state of the women who are also grossly exploited and are left with irredeemably battered and bruised images.

The oppression of women and the environment in the text echoes Gaard's notion that "the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature" (1). The oppression of nature in Agary's *Yellow Yellow* interlocks with the oppression of women. The two complimentary tales of oppression can be explained by "the idea that the rise of modern science, technology, and capitalism produced and relied on the death, domination, and exploitation of a nature gendered female, and that this reinforced and reflected the cultural subordination and exploitation of women" (Thompson,505-506). In Agary's text, the environment is symbolically gendered and there are conscious or unconscious efforts to graphically depict how both women and the environment are structurally connected at the level of "victimhood", in this case, victims of colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy. Agary boldly brings to question the systems that exploit women and the environment. These two layers of exploitation in the text appear double subaltern experience: the first is the land that was/is colonized and exploited, whose state negatively affects the women; the second are the women who are exploited and abused in the same environment.

Conclusion

The various shades of exploitation that have enveloped a former colony of the British Empire are articulated in some evocative telegraphic diction that drive pitiable images of women and the environment. It takes a subaltern woman to tell truly the deep stories of women subaltern in an aggressively exploited subaltern environment. Kaine Agary has proven herself a potent voice for women subaltern, highlighting the culpability of postcolonial / capitalist forces and patriarchy in the ruination of both women and the natural environment. Spivak's position that the subaltern cannot speak is contextual as it may be restricted to time, circumstance and interpretation. Spivak's position is largely a reaction to the Asian-based Subaltern Study Group, which used Gramsci's term "subaltern" in inscribing its identity. Although the notion has a link with the economically dispossessed, it has

LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

much to do with the subaltern woman, to use Piu's words, "the excess of signification … a symbolic signifier within hegemonic narratives".
Piu in his reaction to Spivak's essay observes that:

> The (subaltern) woman is not simply silenced. Rather, her silence is re-inscribed as the trace of an absence which derives from constructing the representation of the woman as the object and subject of discourse. The subaltern woman is thus the excess of signification: she is the non-retrievable difference at the intersection between subject and object. The differential definition of subalternity maps the symbolic space (a third space) of this intersection, illustrating the function of the subaltern woman as a symbolic signifier within hegemonic narratives.(1262)

Kaine Agary's subaltern women are the centerpiece of her narrative. They are the "symbolic signifier" that drive the "hegemonic narrative" of exploitation.

Works Cited

Akinsete, Charles Tolulope (n.d.). "Women's Representation and Environmental Sustainability in the Niger Delta: A Critique of Two Nigerian Novels". Pula: *Botswana Journal of African Studies*. Volume 34, Issue 1, Pp. 36 47.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (Eds.). (2002). *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. Routledge.

Bhabha, H K. (1994). The Location of Culture. London: Routledge.

Das, B.K. (2007) *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism.* Fifth Edition. New Delhi.Atlantic Pub&Dist.

Dutta, Bhaskor Chandra (2021). "History of Subaltern Studies". *Journal of English Language and Literature*. Vol. 8, Issue 3, July - Sep.

Gramsci A (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Guha R (1982) ed. *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian Society and History* Vol. VII, Oxford.

Gyasi, Geosi (9th Feb. 2011). "In an Interview with Nigerian Writer, Kaine Agary". In *Geosi Reads*.

LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research 2024, 21(1): 234-247
www.universalacademicservices.org

LWATI: A Jour. of Contemp. Res.
ISSN: 1813-222 ©March 2024
RESEARCH

https://geosireads.wordpress.com/2011/02/09/in-an-interview-with-nigerian-writer-kaine-agary/

Kaur, Gurreet. (2012). "An Exegesis of Post-colonial Ecofeminism in Contemporary Literature". *International Journal of Law and Social Sciences,* 2(1), 188-195

Louai, El Habib (2012). "Retracing the concept of the subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical Developments and new Applications". *African Journal of History and Culture* (AJHC) Vol. 4(1), pp. 4-8.

Marandi, S. M., & Shabanirad, E. (2015). "Edward Said's Orientalism and the Representation of Oriental Women in George Orwell's Burmese Days" International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences, Vol. 60, Pp. 22-33.
https:// doi.org/10.18052/www.scipress.com/ILSHS.60.22.

Nayar, K. P. (2008) *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction*. Delhi: Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd.

Piu, Piermarco (2023). "The Journey of Subalternity in Gayatri Spivak's Work: Its Sociological Relevance". T*he Sociological Review*, *71*(6), 1258-1276. *https://doi.org/10.1177/00380261231194495*

Nathaniel, S. O. 2017. "Women as Voices of Democratic Sanity in Socio-Politcal Disorderliness: A Study of and *Little Drops*." *NDUNODE*.12 (1): 278-290

Rukundwa, L. S. and van Aarde, A. G. (2007). *The Formation of Postcolonial Theory.HTS* 63(3), Pp. 1171- 1194.

Spivak G. C. (1988). "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *In Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.). Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Said, E. W. (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Thompson, Charis.(2006) "Back to Nature? Resurrecting Ecofeminism after Poststructuralist and Third-Wave Feminisms". *ISIS*, Vol. 97, No. 3 (September), pp. 505-512.