



Reflection of Materialist Ecofeminism in Lynn Nottage's *Ruined*

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Abstract

This study explores the connection between environmental degradation and gender oppression through an ecofeminist perspective, focusing on Lynn Nottage's *Ruined*. It examines how capitalist and patriarchal systems exploit both women and nature, particularly in the civil war-torn Democratic Republic of the Congo. Drawing on materialist ecofeminism as defined by Mary Mellor, the study demonstrates how gender-based power dynamics reflect the extraction and commodification of natural resources for profit. Nottage's *Ruined* highlights the intertwining crises of environmental and gender injustices, with its portrayal of violence against women serving as a metaphor for broader ecological devastation driven by capitalist interests. The paper argues that addressing ecological crises requires confronting the systemic power structures that perpetuate both gender-based violence and environmental degradation.

Keywords: capitalism, materialist ecofeminism, environmental justice, gender oppression, patriarchy, *Ruined*.



انعكاس النسوية البيئية المادية في مسرحية حطام لـ لين نوتاج

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المستخلص :

تستكشف هذه الدراسة العلاقة بين التدهور البيئي والاضطهاد النسوي من خلال منظور النسوية البيئية، مع التركيز على مسرحية "حطام" للكاتبة لين نوتاج. تبحث الدراسة كيف تستغل الأنظمة الرأسمالية والذكورية كل من النساء والطبيعة، خاصة في جمهورية الكونغو الديمقراطية التي عانت من ويلات الحرب الأهلية مستندة إلى النسوية البيئية المادية كما حددها ماري ميلور كما تُظهر الدراسة انعكاس ديناميكيات القوة المبنية على النوع وعملية استخراج وتجارة الموارد الطبيعية من أجل الربح. تسلط مسرحية "حطام" الضوء على الأزمات المتداخلة للظلم البيئي والنوعي، حيث يُمثل العنف ضد النساء كاستعارة للدمار البيئي الأوسع الذي تقوده المصالح الرأسمالية. تبين الدراسة بأنه من الضروري مواجهة الأزمات البيئية من خلال التصدي لهياكل السلطة النظامية التي تديم العنف القائم على النوع الاجتماعي والتدهور البيئي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرأسمالية، النسوية البيئية المادية، العدالة البيئية، الاضطهاد النوعي، النظام الأبوي، حطام

1. Introduction

Lynn Nottage's *Ruined* (2008) depicts terrifying stories of human calamities. The play is set in the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo and highlights the plight of civil war victims. The play is based on Nottage's real experiences because she wrote it after visiting Uganda in 2004, and interviewing refugees in camps. Originally, she intended to rewrite Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*, which is set during the Thirty Years' War in 17th century Europe. However, due to the harsh conditions in Congo and neighboring Uganda where women were often subjected to rape, murder, and slavery, she decided to write about them instead (Tramboo et al., 2015).

The Democratic Republic of Congo is home to some of the world's greatest sources of metals and rare earth materials, which are crucial for producing cutting-edge electronics. The growing reliance on resources such as cobalt, copper, and zinc has incentivized both local and foreign groups to engage in the conflict within Congolese territory. Abundant natural resources, particularly rich mineral deposits, have escalated the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to a global scale. Since 1996, six million people have died as a result of fighting in the region. Following the 1994 Rwandan genocide, a conflict broke out in Congo from 1996 to 1997. It is estimated that Hutu extremists massacred one million minority ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus during this genocide. Among the greatest sources of metals and rare earth materials needed to produce cutting-edge electronics are found in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The increasing dependence on resources like cobalt, copper, and zinc has stimulated migration. Consequently, the North and South Kivu provinces of the Congo have become host to nearly one million Hutu refugees. A few Hutu radicals who began forming militias within the nation were among these refugees. As Tutsi militias emerged to oppose the Hutu factions and as external powers began to align themselves, tensions escalated. Following the victory of the Rwandan Patriotic Front against the genocidal Rwandan government, the newly formed Tutsi-led government intervened in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, formerly known as the Republic of Zaire (The Center for Preventive Action, 2024).

Under President Paul Kagame's direction, Rwandan forces and Tutsi militias in the Congo, backed by Rwanda, invaded Zaire, which was thereafter governed by Dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. These acts were justified by the claims that Hutu extremists who had escaped across the border were being housed by the Mobutu dictatorship and that Hutu factions in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo represented a threat to the Tutsi population. Rwanda fought the First Congo War against Zaire with support from other African nations including Uganda, Angola, and Burundi, which

were concerned about Mobutu's backing of rebel groups on the continent and their own security. Laurent Kabila, the then-leader of Zaire's opposition, assisted in organizing the invasion. Many people died in the eastern parts of North and South Kivu, including non-combatant Congolese, refugees, and former Hutu militants and members of armed groups. Following the Kabila-Kagame coalition's victory of the First Congo War in 1997, Mobutu fled Kinshasa. Zaire was renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo after Kabila took office as president (The Center for Preventive Action, 2024).

Nottage highlights that the play is a modern work that portrays current actions taking place in the rural areas of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. These incidents highlight the terrifying experiences of raping survivors, who not only face a significant risk of HIV infection but also fear physical mutilation and abandonment. Nottage mentions that this play has a lot to do with the current era. She was pushed to write it quickly because she wanted to connect with people who might not be aware of the situation or might be aware of it but not motivated to take action (Salama, 2023). This study explores how Lynn Nottage's *Ruined* reflects the Intersection of environmental degradation and gender oppression within the framework of ecofeminism. It examines how the exploitation of women in the play mirrors the exploitation of natural resources in the war-torn Democratic Republic of the Congo. Additionally, it investigates how the capitalist and patriarchal systems portrayed in the play contribute to both environmental destruction and social injustice. These points aim to provide an ecofeminist analysis of the play, highlighting the connections between gender oppression, environmental degradation, and the socio-political dynamics of war and capitalism in the Congo.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Key Words

2.1.1 Ecofeminism

The theory of ecofeminism is a combination of two essential concerns: ecology and feminism (Ali & Ismael., 2019). The term ecology comes from the field of biological science, and it refers to the study of natural environmental systems. Ecology seeks to investigate the workings of these natural communities in order to maintain and encourage a rich interconnectivity of life, while also investigating the elements that disturb this harmony, ultimately resulting in the extinction of animals as well as plants. Human action is the principal source of such disturbance (Ruether, 1997). Women, historically, has been considered closer to nature due to the excessively emotional, weak, and submissive in comparison to men (Al-Zubaidi, 2019). Feminism, on the other hand, is a multidimensional movement distinguished by its intricate layers. It is a movement within the

context of liberal democratic cultures that advocates for the full involvement of women in political rights (Ruether,1997).

2.2 Related Works

Many researchers have used ecofeminism theory as their theoretical framework in works of literature, but quite a little has been applied on Nottage's *Ruined*. The play encompasses themes of the oppression of women, exploration of nature and the influence of capitalism on both women and nature. This research examines the parallel between women and nature and how patriarchal society influenced on both. For instance, Mary Mellor (1997) in her book *Feminism & Ecology* investigates the relationship between women and nature. She claims that, among the rise of extreme economic liberalism, global capitalism, and postmodern pluralism, the feminist and Green movements hold the possibility for a new radical movement to arise. Similarly, Vandana Shiva's (2002) *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution and Profits* brings attention to the deterioration of the environment and the exclusion of the most impoverished populations worldwide, revealing their limited ability to access and benefit from their own land's resources. Additionally, Carolyn Merchant's (1992) *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World* illuminates the philosophical, scientific, ethical and economic foundations of environmental issues. It examines how radical ecologists can change both science and society to uphold life on Earth. Moreover, Maysoon Mahi's work (2019) "Unspeakable Suffering: Women's Experience of Trauma in Lynn Nottage's *Ruined*" examines women's experiences of witnessing and enduring physical violations and profound suffering, contextualized within the broader framework of their trauma during the civil war.

3. The Analytical Part

3.1 Methodology of the Study

Materialist ecofeminism presents a feminist critique of both capitalism and patriarchy, focusing on the material conditions that underlie the oppression of women and their connection to environmental degradation. This perspective emphasizes the ways in which economic structures, particularly capitalism, sustain the subjugation of both women and nature. Additionally, it critiques the systemic domination and dualistic thinking that reinforce oppressive hierarchies, advocating for an ethic of care that challenges existing power relations. Rooted in a Marxist framework, materialist ecofeminism examines the interrelationship between capitalism, women's oppression, and the exploitation of nature (Merchant,2005). Mellor (1997), in *Feminism and Ecology*, provides an introductory

definition of the movement, illustrating how it draws upon the environmental concerns of the green movement while integrating feminist insights into how societal structures shaped by gender dynamics perpetuate the oppression and exploitation of women.

3.2 Data Analysis

1. Reflection of Materialist Ecofeminism in Ruined

The word ruined, which is the title of the play, is used metaphorically to describe both raping the lands and the sexual assaulting women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where these crimes have become a widespread and alarming catastrophic (Saleh, 2017). Esther J. Terry (2016) argues that *Ruined*'s central theme is the conflicts that arise between ruined lands and harmed women, where these conflicts "waged not just over women's bodies, but over the ruined body of the Congo herself" (qtd. in Terry, 2016, p.166) The act of despoiling the lands is discreetly linked to the violation of the female body, a connection that is powerfully made within the confines of the theatrical play.

The opening scene of *Ruined* starts with "A small mining town. The sounds of the tropical Ituri rain forest. Democratic Republic of the Congo" (Nottage, 2010, p.5). The rain indicates a call for help to both the land and women. Rain is associated with purification, renewal, and the desire to reclaim the land in light of the harmful activities of mining. It is the silent cry of earth and women's suffering due to the war. The rain is the crying of the sky, expressing the earth's sadness and the pain of the female characters in the play during the war. Moreover, it shows the parallel between women and nature which highlights the experiences of grief and vulnerability. The repeated appearance of rain throughout the play reflects the challenges and circumstances in which the characters live in. The nature sends a message, emphasizing the ongoing need for healing and reconciliation. The rain is a messenger conveying a message of despair and hope. It is a mean of communication that expresses the pain and resilience of the land and women.

Material ecofeminism promotes an all-encompassing strategy that takes into account social, economic, and environmental factors to emphasize the connections between people and the natural world as well as among humans. The economic systems that govern resource use and labor are deeply intertwined with gendered power dynamics, making the study of sex/gender disparities crucial for ecofeminists. The gendered nature of the relationship between humans and nature is shaped by economic exploitation, which often disproportionately affects women and marginalized groups. As a result,

there are several conceptual obstacles in studying the intersections of economy, gender, and nature (Mellor, 2000).

Christian who is a traveller salesman tells Mama Nadi about the current situation in the country. He notes how the things are going to get chaotic. People rave about how the red dirt along this route is rich in Coltan, a valuable mineral used in electronics. They also mention that many miners are expected to arrive here by September to exploit these resources. People's actions to extract raw material highlight how natural resources, especially soil rich in Coltan, is being exploited more and more. The exploitation of natural resources, particularly soil rich in Coltan, represents a larger issue explored by Materialist ecofeminism, emphasizing the necessity of redefining the relationship between nature and humans. Christian highlights the growing desire for control over territories rich in natural resources, such as Coltan, driven by the economic and political motivations to exploit them for profit. His description of this exploitation underscores the violent and destructive ways in which both the land and its people are treated, reflecting a broader critique of the ruthless extraction practices that benefit a few at the expense of many. Christian's depiction of the fight for raw materials emphasizes how urgent it is to address these issues and adopt a holistic strategy that acknowledges the interconnectedness of social structures, the natural world, and humankind.

One of the rebel soldiers proudly displays a piece of cloth filled with small chunks of Coltan. The rebel soldier tells how he gets it by "Dirty poacher been diggin' up our forest" (Nottage, 2000, p.15). Mama explains to him that it has no value anymore because each miner entering this area has a bucket full of it. This highlights the economic aspect of this exploitation. This shows the economic aspect of this exploitation, showing how both human society and nature are intertwined in a system where natural resources are exploited for wealth. The rebel soldier is proud to have the metal Coltan, extracted from the ground, which is used in the manufacture of electronics, making it a valuable commodity. Ecofeminism criticizes the human exploitation of natural resources driven by capitalism, a system that prioritizes short-term profit over long-term sustainability and justice.

Environment and human life have been destroyed in modern era because of wars (Kadhim, 2022). To understand social systems that underpin the unsustainable trends of nowadays, as well as the concrete relationships that exist between humans and the environment, is the first step toward achieving environmental justice and environmental ethics. This calls for a dual dialectic involving human-to-human dynamics (patriarchy, capitalism, racism, etc.) and human-to-nature interactions, in addition to a trilateral association involving human-to-human and human-to-nature links. This complex interdependency necessitates a thorough and in-depth analysis that can combine a social dynamics assessment with an ecological dynamics

assessment. Every component in such a framework has an active component. Human-to-human relationships have a major impact on how humans and nature interact. As such, human interaction with its natural environment either restricts or limits options or produces undesirable results (Mellor,2000). The conversation between Mr. Harari who is a Lebanese merchant and Mama Nadi highlights capitalism and the exploitation of resources. Mr. Harari describes this era as “this damnable age of the mobile phone; it’s become quite the precious ore” (Nottage, 2010, p.18) illustrates the material side of the relationship between man and nature. It shows how to exploit resources without considering the consequences. Capitalism and resource extraction drive the unsustainability that results from the reification of natural resources as commodities for economic profit. Moreover, the exchange between Mr. Harari and Mama Nadi reveals the exchange of power dynamics and economic inequality, which is part of the dual dialectic between humans and human. Mr. Harari behaves condescendingly towards Mama Nadi, as he emphasizes economic superiority and the presence of oppression and class distinction. In addition, Mama Nadi’s inquiry about the reason for the high demand for Colton after they were previously just “more black dirt” (Nottage,2010, p.18) is based on ethics and how priority is given to profit at the expense of the environment.

A militia leader, Kitembe expresses his frustration at the injustice that his community faces. He refers to the exploitation of their lands and resources by foreign companies and government forces. He says their actions are justified in the face of aggression and oppression. Kitembe ask, “How do we feed our families? Ay? They bring soldiers from Uganda, drive us from our land and make us refugees” (Nottage,2010, p.52). Osembenga, the military leader, and his men set several mining villages ablaze, forcing the inhabitants to flee deep into the wilderness. One of the rebel soldiers reveals that their mission includes burning everything in order to conserve bullets. Kitembe, vowing to show no mercy to Osembenga and his allies, promises to match their cruelty with equal brutality. He criticizes the government for allowing foreign companies to exploit their land. Meanwhile, Mr. Harari interrupts to inquire about a business matter, and offers Kitembe his card and a drink as a token of kindness. Patriarchal violence often exploits wars as a pretext to further marginalize vulnerable groups and seize control of natural resources, serving the interests of external political and economic agendas. This has led to social injustice and environmental degradation. Capitalist systems give priority to the accumulation of wealth at the expense of both society and the environment. Mr. Harari attempts to involve Kitembe in trade discussions reflects a materialist critique of capitalism. The soldier describes the opposition force’s brutality, highlighting how they burn everything to conserve bullets. This reveals that, rather than using

ammunition to suppress resistance and destroy infrastructure, they resort to widespread destruction through fire. The insurgents arbitrarily burn forests and villages, destroying both environmental resources, and infrastructure and harming the local ecosystem on which community survival depends.

Mary Mellor mentions in her book *Feminism and Ecology* (1997) that material ecofeminism emphasizes the material conditions of exploitation in both nature and women. Mellor offers an initial explanation of the phenomenon that incorporates elements of feminist philosophy while capitalizing on environmental movement concerns about the effects of human activity on non-human life. As Mellor notes it is a movement that “sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women” (Mellor,1997, p.1). According to this viewpoint, gender-driven power dynamics that marginalize, oppress, and confine women characterize human civilization.

Mama Nadi and Christian speak about the violence in the area to control a mine. Christian mentions “Things militias are battling for control of the area... six months ago, it was a forest filled with noisy birds, now it looks like God spooned out heaping mouthfuls of earth!” (Nottage,2010, p.28). The conversation shows the capitalism and its effect in extraction of natural materials from the Yaka Yaka mine. It gives priority to profit at the expense of human well-being and environmental preservation. Mama Nadi’s acknowledgment of the mine’s value reflects material reality and human’s focus on economic profit. This conversation also reflects gender dynamics. Mama Nadi represents an independent woman who challenges traditional roles. While Christian shows an attempt to control her through the conversation. Mama Nadi is concerned about the situation and tries to change the conversation and shift his attention to the song but Christian shows how gender dynamics controls women in patriarchal societies. The noisy bird in the forest demonstrates how vivid life was before industrialization. Birds displaced from their habitats are vocalizing loudly in a call for assistance. These birds represent what occurs to women during warfare, such as being marginalized and having their bodies colonized. Women and animals are viewed as the others whose rights are ignored and who are used as resources for financial gain.

Osembenga presents himself loudly in the bar of Mama Nadi. He refers to what will happen if she hides the rebel soldier Kisembe. Osembenga says that Kisembe only thinks about himself to be wealthy by controlling land owned to people. He and other Men like him lead these reckless militias in a malicious mission in the name of “democracy” (Nottage,2010 , p.30).The situation sheds light on gender, exploitation of the environment and the power. Mama Nadi represents women from local community, embodying

the pastoral that is associated with femininity. Osembenga represents patriarchy and militarism who exploits both local people and the environment for his personal gain. He is an example of hierarchical power structures that perpetuate oppression and exploitation. Jerome Kitembe, the village leader, exploits natural resources and people for his own benefit. He claims to be promoting liberation and peace, but his actions reflect patriarchal capitalism's use of both human and environmental resources.

Osembenga offers to protect Mama Nadi, reinforcing traditional gender roles. However, Mama Nadi's refusal demonstrates her independence. This independence serves as a form of resistance against both patriarchal dominance and environmental degradation. By refusing to be a victim, Mama Nadi and the villagers challenge traditional gender roles and assert their agency in protecting their community and environment.

Women and animals are often juxtaposed in religious rituals involving sacrifices. In these contexts, either a female individual or an animal would typically be offered to the deities as a means of purification or protection for a specific community. It is evident from these instances that the female identity is closely linked to the natural world, especially in relation to animals (Gaard,1993).

Nottage creates a parallel between the female characters and the birds of nature in the play. She gives the characters a description that is connected to the elements of nature. In the bar of Mama Nadi there is a "a covered bird cage conspicuously sits in the corner of the room" (Nottage,2010, p.5). The bird in the cage symbolizes the patriarchal society's control over women and nature. It embodies exploitation and detention of the natural world. A bird should be free in its unfettered habitat. Thus, both women and the natural world are exploited and emptied by human activities for profit without regard to the consequences. Moreover, women are forced to work in prostitutes because it is the only solution to protect themselves due to the brutal conditions of war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They are victims of sexual violence and have been abandoned or rejected by their families and communities. With limited means of survival, prostitution becomes their only option in the war-torn environment, as Mama Nadi's bar provides them with shelter and a form of protection, even though it comes at the cost of exploitation. This situation highlights the devastating impact of war on women's bodies and lives. The bird represents their freedom being taken away and restricted. The bird locked in its cage depicts the feelings of captivity and helplessness that women experience in wars. These women suffer from the effects of civil war and society's rejection after they have been raped. They are unable to escape from their circumstances, just like what a bird feels after being placed in a cage and unable to fly. Women

throughout war are unable to protect themselves from displacement, sexual violence and exploitation. The covered bird that is the cage indicates confinement and control.

The playwright introduces the stories of the female characters Mama Nadi, Salima, Sophie, and Josephine, illustrating their experiences and challenges during the war. Congolese rebels and government soldiers exploit them as sexual slaves. These women have been rejected by their families who have refused to provide any kind of assistance. They face their physical injuries, psychological traumas, and numerous social and economic obstacles. They are left alone to face their unknown destiny.

Mama Nadi is in her early forties. She is a shrewd and crafty woman who runs a bar and brothel. She uses her profound grasp of deceit to keep her company profitable during the conflict by taking advantage of customers from rival factions. She puts money before allegiance to any one side and provides entertainment services to both government forces and rebels. Mama Nadi ironically gives the ruined girls in her care support and sustenance in a morally dubious way, all the while she gets profit using their vulnerability. She makes it clear that her establishment is a business venture rather than a philanthropic initiative. As a result, Mama Nadi is purposefully shown as having ethically dubious motivations. She takes actions that could surprise the spectator, but in the end, it becomes clear that she must make morally dubious choices in order to survive. Mama Nadi shows herself to be a multifaceted character who possesses both cruelty and compassion throughout the play (Muhi,2019).

Mama asks Christian to bring her a red lipstick. She tells him it is “better be red” (Nottage, 2010, p. 6). Red is a colour that represents love, warmth, and sensuality but it is also known to be linked to danger, aggression, and boldness (Van Braam, 2024) It symbolizes the bloodshed and internal conflicts tearing the country apart. It stands for extracted raw materials that are describes as “red dirt” (Nottage,2010, p.10). Red is linked to Mama Nadi’s past, where she was subjected to rape and psychological pain. In addition, Mama Nadi embodies the characteristics of red in her strength and bravery, as well as in her ability to take advantage of the wartime atmosphere.

Mama Nadi addresses Mr. Harari, expressing her frustration with the usurpation of rights from the owners. She narrates her personal experience when she was eleven years old about a white man and old Papa. Mama Nadi raises questions about the injustice women face in accessing land rights, she notes “how does a woman get a piece of land, without having to pick up a fucking gun?” (Nottage,2010, p.19). It shows the influence of capitalism and

the dynamic of power over women and nature in Congo. Mama presents the voice of the voiceless whose right has been taken by force. She expresses her anger about what happened to the land of her family. She shows the injustice that has been practice over marginalized communities, and what they face under war and capitalism. Women face challenges in securing access to natural resources, such as water and food, within a male-dominated global system. Women and nature are two sides of the same coin, both considered as a second class and should be controlled by male.

Women in the Third World are acutely aware that poverty lies at the core of power dynamics affecting their communities and the environment. Environmental issues such as pollution, deforestation, and starvation have a direct impact on their daily lives, forcing entire communities—both men and women—to travel further in search of resources, struggle for clean water, and face threats to their overall health and survival. For these women, the connection between poverty and environmental degradation is not an abstract idea but a lived reality that affects everyone in their communities. While the struggle over land and resources is not limited to women alone, their roles in maintaining household and community well-being often make the effects of environmental degradation more immediate and personal for them (Ruether,1997).

Mama Nadi tells Sophie about the story of a diamond that is given to her by someone to kept it to him. It illustrates the lives of the Third Word women. These women are oppressed by the control of the patriarchal.

Mama Nadi's decision to keep the raw material reflects her strategic understanding of the capitalist system, where safeguarding resources is crucial for her own survival and the protection of the women she is responsible for. Women's possession of these resources is almost non-existent in an environment surrounded by poverty. Mama Nadi said that "My mother taught me that you can follow behind everyone and walk in the dust, or you can walk ahead through the unbroken thorny brush." (Nottage,2010, p.36). The dust symbolizes marginalized aspects of society such as the exploitation of nature and the enslavement of women. Walking in the dust depicts Mama Nadi's acknowledgment of the difficult circumstances that she and the women in her country face. The thorny brush described by Mama refers to the oppressive systems and structures that restrict and oppress women. It is an acknowledgment by Mama of the difficulties and dangers that she and the women under her care face.

Many women, particularly those in cultures dominated by strict gender norms, experience subjugation, marginalization, and oppression in various forms (Al-Hassani, 2022). Their lives are profoundly shaped by the physical realities of reproduction, mortality, and physiological needs, though the extent and nature of

this impact vary across different social and cultural contexts. However, when emphasizing the importance of incorporating a feminist perspective into environmental ethics, it is critical to avoid portraying women as the only solution to environmental suffering and unfairness. This diverts attention away from tackling the larger issue of male domination and exploitation of both women and the natural environment (Mellor,2000).

Josephine who is in her early twenties, works at Mama's brothel. She is aware of her attraction power over men. Josephine is the daughter of a chieftain of the tribe. She is resentful because she is forced to use her attractive appearance and qualities to get money. She is employed in the bar as a dancer and prostitute. Despite of the position of her father as the leader but she shares the same fate of Congo's women. She is raped by militias as she is exiled from the village along with the other raped women without mercy. Men often view women's bodies as commodities, seeing them as objects from which they can gain profit. Society also imposes a double burden of discrimination on these women, who face racism both as females and because of what happens to them. These women are not only marginalized by society but are also sexually violated by men within their own country (Nottage, 2010).

Josephine's erratic dance "becomes uglier, more frantic. She abruptly stops, overwhelmed" (Nottage,2010, p.43). It conveys an intense feeling of misery and exploitation. She dances to please the desires of the drinking soldiers who visit the bar, not for her own pleasure. Josephine's dancing reflects the exploitation of women's bodies for profit and entertainment, much like the exploitation of natural resources. The idea of a virtuous woman is sometimes restricted to being associated with traits like humility, shyness, self-effacement, tenderness, and receptiveness towards men in many patriarchal civilizations. This idealized image is maintained because people are afraid of making mistakes, which allows women to be oppressed and leads to the continuation of a number of problems, such as rape, anorexia nervosa, and domestic abuse (Eaton & Lorentzen, 2003).

Josephine's erratic dance "becomes uglier, more frantic. She abruptly stops, overwhelmed" (Nottage,2010, p.43). It symbolizes her inner turmoil and the overwhelming emotional toll of her exploitation. The dance is not just a physical performance for entertainment, but an embodiment of the forced commodification of her body, mirroring how women's bodies are often objectified for profit and control. In this context, her stop is not simply a break in movement but a reflection of the exhaustion and misery she feels from being trapped in this oppressive situation. Her dance becomes uglier and more frantic as it intensifies, emphasizing the destructive effects of being reduced to an object of pleasure for others. This parallels broader

societal patterns of exploitation, where women are subjected to ideals of virtue and femininity, often at the expense of their autonomy. By abruptly stopping, Josephine is momentarily breaking from the cycle of exploitation, even if only briefly, as her body and spirit can no longer bear the weight of her forced performance. This is not merely about physical exhaustion but the overwhelming emotional weight of living under constant pressure to conform to patriarchal demands.

Sophie is an eighteen-year-old, attractive, intelligent young woman. At the beginning of the play, her uncle Christian presents her to work at Mama Nadi's bar. Sophie plays the part of the bar singer, showcasing a lovely voice. She suffered the terrible ordeal of being sexually raped and injured by soldiers, which left her ruined or disfigured. Sophie wants to save enough money so that she can have surgery to repair the physical harm that was done to her.

Christian presents Sophie to Mama as a commodity that can be bought and sold. The price of this commodity is based on the body shape and her ability to serve men as a prostitute. Sophie has been raped by soldiers in a way that has destroyed her genital organs by militias. The exploitation that women experience is parallel to destruction to the land of the Congo. This land is rapped to extract the raw by mining practice. Both the land and Sophie are viewed as a commodity. Those who have power can exploit or dispose whenever it is needed.

Christian tries to convince Mama to let Sophia stay with her in the bar. Mama said to him if she allows other women into her home, she would suffer like the refugees in the camp. Everybody has raised their hand since this battle began. When half the country is starving, she feeds eight women at a time, so she cannot be responsible for one more girl. (Nottage,2010). The situation of Mama Nadi presents the effects of war on women because it shows how Mama Nadi struggles to balance her responsibilities during the chaos of war. The war has caused a lot of suffering, hunger and displacement. Mama Nadi expresses her concern that if she takes another girl, she would force to live in refugee camps due to lack of food. Her role is a mixture of resilience and exploitation. She is a woman who runs a business and succeeds in providing care for herself and the eight women who live with her. In addition, her refusal to receive Sophia indicates how the capitalist system focuses on material interests at the expense of the well-being of vulnerable individuals.

The society considers Sophie as a "bad luck" (Nottage,2010, p.37), highlighting the injustice of patriarchal societies. It also shows the negative notions of society towards woman. They regard rapped women as bad omen

to those are who around her and she should be rejected. In addition, women are seen as the reason for their raping instead of holding those responsible for the crime.

Salima is one of the female characters in the play. She is a tired peasant woman who arrives at Mama Nadi's house. After five months as a victim of sexual enslavement, she endures rapes on multiple occasions, kidnappings, and the tragic death of her child at the hands of rebel soldiers. When she finally returns to her Hema community, she is rejected by her family and eventually banished by her husband, Fortune. Salima is forced to have sex with troops who come to Mama Nadi's bar in order to obtain food, which puts her in an uncomfortable situation. Salima becomes pregnant from one of the soldiers who has beaten her, which makes her fearful of what will happen to her if Fortune her husband finds out. Tormented by memories of the soldiers who have harmed her and killed her young daughter, Beatrice, Salima is unsure that she will ever be able to forgive Fortune for what has done to her.

Mama Nadi confirms what Salima has faced if she returns to the village. The villagers consider her as "a whore" (Nottage, 2010, p.44). Mama tells Salima that she doubts her ability to withstand the hatred of her community. The playwright sheds light on marginalized and oppressed groups. Mama Nadi represents a loving, supportive character. The treatment of Salim's husband reflects the authoritarian conditions within patriarchal society. Women are exposed to a lot of violence and exploitation. Mama warns Salima of the dangers of returning to her community because she will be blamed. Mama's offer to stay with her represents the importance of creating societies that care and give priority to humans, marginalized people, and the natural world.

Salima tells the story of the attack by soldiers on Sophia while she was working in her garden. She describes to Sophia how she is attacked, kidnapped, and her child is killed in front of her eyes. The bond between women and nature appears through Salim's connection to her garden. She used to find comfort in her garden among tomato trees and frangipani tree. The sky was clear, and the sun was shining. All of sudden, everything disappeared when four men enter. One of the soldiers struck her cheek with the muzzle of his weapon. The other troops hold her down by his foot. One of them was heavy as an ox. His footwear is worn and cracked from being out in the rain for weeks. Her child was wailing and shouting. At that moment, a soldier stamped his boot on her skull and killed her. There is interconnectedness between violence against women and the exploitation of nature. Salima's connection to her garden symbolizes the traditional bond between women and the natural world, where she finds solace and comfort. However, this bond is violently disrupted by the intrusion of soldiers,

representing patriarchal domination and aggression not only against women but also against the earth. The description of the soldier's heavy boot pressing down on Salima's chest, with imagery likening it to drying sorghum, highlights the brutality and forcefulness of the assault, drawing parallels between the oppression of women and the destruction of nature. The soldier's actions not only physically harm Salima but also result in the death of her child, symbolizing the devastating impact of patriarchal violence on both women and future generations. Furthermore, the soldiers' disregard for Salim's cries for her infant's safety reflects a broader disregard for the nurturing and caregiving roles traditionally associated with women, as well as a lack of empathy for the natural world. The image of the soldier stamping his boot on the infant's skull symbolizes the ruthless exploitation and destruction of life, echoing the exploitation and degradation of the environment by patriarchal systems.

Salima lives in a small village. Her rough hands symbolize her connection to the land because she is a farmer. In rural communities, women participate in cultivating the land. But she was forced to leave her land because of the customs and traditions of the community. The villager considers Salima a disgrace because she was kidnapped and raped by rebels. Salima does not only suffer from the shock of losing her child and rejection of her community, but she suffers from the theft of her land and freedom. Salima is insulted and accused of being "filthy dog" (Nottage, 2010, p.63) by her husband. It indicates racism and discrimination against her as a woman. She describes her experience as being passed between the soldiers like "wash rag" (Nottage, 2010, p.63), underscoring the brutality of her ordeal.

At the end of the play, she decides to act selflessly to stop government soldiers from abusing Josephine, Mama, and Sophie. Salima's death represents the struggles of women in their society against oppression and exploitation. Salima's screaming "You will not fight your battles on my body anymore" (Nottage, 2010, p.63), depicts the pain of all women who have endured violence and exploitation from the capitalism and patriarchy. Those who use power to destroy and exploit nature and women perpetuate a cycle of domination that reflects the interconnected forms of oppression in society. Salima's declaration before her death symbolizes her triumph over the patriarchal forces that sought to control her body. These forces, representing both the individuals and systems of oppression, can no longer exert their dominance over her. Her resistance underscores the broader need to dismantle structures of abuse that subjugate both women and the natural world.

In Congolese society, a woman who has been sexually assaulted is considered disreputable. Christian says to Mama Nadi that "the village isn't

a place for a girl who has been ... ruined. It brings shame, dishonor to the family” (Nottage, 2010, p.11). Nottage portrays these issues throughout the female characters in the play. Women who have experienced sexual assault are frequently coerced into a state of bondage, where they are viewed as commodities with little value in their communities. These societies compel these women to commodify their own bodies and trade sexual services. Mama tells him, “I’m ruined. (Louder.) I’m Ruined” (Nottage, 2010, p.67). At the end of the play, Mama Nadi confesses to Christiane when he proposes to marry her that she is ruined. The word ruined here refers to the sexual assault that she has been exposed to during the civil war. Women are raped in brutal ways disable them to give birth and be mothers anymore. Raping of women parallels the depletion of primary resources from nature which leads to its destruction.

The presence of rain at the end of the play signifies the beginning of a new chapter for the life of the characters. Rain represents the ability to withstand difficulties despite the challenges and uncertainty of the future.

4. Conclusions

Nottage in *Ruined* (2008) depicts the intertwined struggles faced by nature and women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It embodies the injustice resulting from patriarchal capitalist system. It shows the real motive behind wars which is to exploit natural resources and deplete them. Such wars serve and achieve profits for capitalist companies. Mama Nadi, Salima, Sophie embodies the violence against women and how women use their bodies as commodities to gain profited from. Nottage uses symbols such as rain and birds to illustrate the depth of women’s connection with nature. Through these symbols, she sheds light on the suffering of man and the environment. *Ruined* is a powerful testament to the power of women and nature and an urge to come together towards a more just future. By strengthening the voices of women and nature to stand against oppression and environmental injustice.

Here, the research questions that are put in the introduction are presented here; each research question aside.

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