Petromodernity, Oil Capitalism and Enviro-Justice in the Extractive Sacrifice Zones: A Study on Select Petrofiction

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by

Priyanka M.C.

Under the Supervision of

Dr.Nila N.

Assistant Professor and Research Guide

Mercy College, Palakkad

Research Centre for Comparative Studies

Postgraduate Department of English

Mercy College, Palakkad

Affiliated to the University of Calicut

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PREFACE

Energy is a seldom conversed topic in the field of English Language and Literature. While environmental humanities and other interdisciplinary disciplines percolated into literary studies, the field of energy humanities remained on the periphery, untouched by literary scholars. Even when the surging crude oil prices are featured regularly in the Indian newspaper and the public indignation is rising, even when the country and its several households struggle with imminent inflation, the culture of fossil fuel consumption is rarely a focus of literary studies. This is primarily because of the invisibility of oil in literary and cultural discourses. The thesis attempts to bring attention to the field of Energy Humanities, specifically Petrocultural Studies.

Having come across the specific discipline while reading an article on cli-fi fiction in the *Malayalam Varika*, wherein the author quotes Amitav Ghosh to spotlight the lack of research in petrofiction, the research began with an investigation that provided modest, yet significant studies on the same. However, the lack of a distinct and single canonical theory repeatedly proved to be an ordeal in the research. At this juncture, the researcher has adopted diverse theoretical strands from the petrocultural fabric to traverse the challenge and provide a unified analysis.

The study could be placed in the broad interdisciplinary academic field of Energy Humanities . The thesis is primarily a study to identify the modes of modernity and capitalism in the extractive sites. The extractive sites are fundamentally capitalist sacrifice zones where people and the environment are traumatised and obliterated beyond recognition. The study had primarily drawn on the concepts put forward by Stephanie LeMenegar to identify petromodernity

in the sacrifice zones. The ideas on oil capitalism proposed by Imre Szemen, George Caffentiz and Ian Rutledge will be employed to ascertain the petrocapitalist features and conflicts in the fiction discussed. To vindicate the status of the regions as sacrifice zones, the enviro- justice theories of Rob Nixon, specifically the idea of slow violence and displacement, and Michael Watts' concept of petroviolence are employed. In conjunction with these the petro-sexual theories of Sheena Wilson and Marxian class theories are applied in the study to identify gender and class discordance.

The study attempts a detailed investigation of select petrofiction, namely Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* (1991), Jennifer Haigh's *Heat and Light* (2016), Abdelrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* (1984), Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* (2010) and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*(2006). Several questions pertaining to the creation of oil sacrifice zones, marginalisation of oil communities, petro-violence, petro-sexual politics and enviro-justice have been answered. The inquiry also deals with slow violence and diverse modes of displacement faced by the oil community and its consequences.

Priyanka M.C.

PETROMODERNITY, OIL CAPITALISM AND ENVIRO-JUSTICE IN THE EXTRACTIVE SACRIFICE ZONES: A STUDY ON SELECT PETROFICTION

PRIIYANKA M.C.,ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AND RESEARCH SCHOLAR,
MERCY COLLEGE, PALAKKAD

Abstract

The thesis, "Petromodernity, Oil Capitalism and Enviro- Justice in the Extractive Sacrifice Zones: A Study on Select Petrofiction" belongs to the broad interdisciplinary academic field of Energy Humanities with a specific focus on Petrocultural Studies. The study identifies and analyses petrofiction set in the oil extraction sites in the global energy map. The thesis is primarily a study to identify the modes of modernity and capitalism in the energy extractive sites. The extractive sites are fundamentally capitalist sacrifice zones where people and the environment are traumatised and obliterated beyond recognition. The study has drawn on the concepts put forward by Stephanie LeMenegar to identify petromodernity in the sacrifice zones. The ideas on oil capitalism proposed by Imre Szemen, George Caffentiz and Ian Rutledge will be employed to ascertain the petrocapitalist features and conflicts in the fiction discussed. To vindicate the status of the regions as sacrifice zones, the enviro- justice theories of Rob Nixon, specifically the idea of slow violence and displacement, and Michael Watts' concept of petroviolence are employed. In conjunction with these the petro-sexual theories of Sheena Wilson and Marxian class theories are applied in the study to identify gender and class discordance.The research attempts to make sense of the globalised oil scenario by comprehending different geographical oil terrain separately. The study is conducted on five literary texts/petrofiction which narrate the tales of three different crude oil arenas in the world oil map: America, the Arabian Peninsula and Nigeria. Through these novels, namely Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* (1991), Jennifer Haigh's *Heat and Light* (2016), Abdelrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* (1984), Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* (2010) and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*(2006), the research evaluates the flex of an ambivalent petrocultural transition in the diverse sacrifice zones.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Across the world, oil is invoked as a machine of destiny. Oil will make you rich, oil will make you poor, oil will bring war, oil will deliver peace, oil will define our world as much as the glaciers did in the Ice Age" —Peter Maass

Oil is the most substantial resource in the present capitalist world system. The world order is so entrenched in oil and other fossil fuel resources that one could barely imagine a life without them. In the twenty-first century, petroleum underlies the normative vision of household, work, and social belonging. Though most ordinary people are only reminded of transportation when they speak about oil, the world is greatly indebted to this lubricant. From erasers to fertilisers, non-stick pans to roofing tiles, and nail polishes to storage containers, oil tends to be visibly invisible in modern life.

As one perceives today, the modern world is enabled by oil and is charged and governed by this carbonised energy extracted from the earth's interior. As Daniel Yergin remarks, "It is oil that makes possible where we live, how we live, how we commute to work, how we travel—even where we conduct our courtships. It is the lifeblood of suburban communities" (14). Nevertheless, the role of oil in influencing culture is often neglected. Though oil has attracted interest from different disciplines and domains of public life, its cultural implications in our society require severe academic consideration. Thus oil tends to veil itself up or is refashioned so that it tends to be invisible in the mainstream cultural products.

Nevertheless, a modern citizen in the fuel-driven world is responsible for comprehending and defining what oil is. *An Oxford Dictionary of Chemical*

Engineering explains oil as “One of various liquid, viscid, unctuous, usually inflammable, chemically neutral sub-stances that is lighter than and insoluble in water, but soluble in alcohol and ether and classified as non-volatile” (Schaschke 263). The above description indisputably describes oil in its material nature or oil as matter. However, the cultural meaning and the context of oil are absent here.

The cultural meaning of oil is ambiguous and evasive and a perfect definition is hard to accomplish. In *The Ecology of Modernism: American Environments and Avante – Garde Poetics,* Joshua Schuster describes oil in the following terms.

> Oil is a trope and a condition, a substance and a spectacle, a paradigmatic experience of the new and the now, as well as an ancient, epochal form of pressurised carbon. It is a vision of the sublime encrusted in geology and a tradable commodity that can move as fast as finance capital. Oil has modernism, modernity, and the slash between the two written all over it. (163)

This description emphasises oil's magical, materialistic, economic, geological, and historical manifestations. It also describes how today's modernity is also oil modernity. Following the general practice in the oil industry, the researcher will use the term, oil to refer to crude oil and other natural gas liquids.

Many petro-cultural critics draw attention to how modernism or modernity as one sees today is attached to the history of oil per se. This modernisation of the world can be seen as a second Promethean Revolution. In Greek mythology, Prometheus changed the world by introducing fire – heat and light energy. In the modern petro-fable, fossil fuels like coal and oil brought progress through the industrial revolution and labour discounting machinery. The

commoner who possessed this inanimate energy-slave – oil/coal- could till the land, break rocks and dig trenches with minimum human labour. Thus oil served as a solution to the clashes between classes and gender, providing them equality.

Before discovering fossil fuels, the world was steered by two major energy systems - solar energy and human energy. Here human energy refers to the energy of the enslaved people. Even though other modes of energy systems like wind energy and water energy existed, they had many drawbacks. Firstly the energy produced from wind, water or fire was not easy to manipulate. Also, the power it produced was minuscule. Thus the majestic civilisations, the horrendous wars and the ancient monuments were created by the imprisoned muscle power of the enslaved people. Even though there were hues and cries about the immorality of the system of slavery by the nineteenth century, the societal structure could not abolish slavery as it would have been suicidal. The whole civilisation was built, organised and depended on slavery.

Thus, while politicians and social workers tried hard to abolish slavery, scientists and engineers were in pursuit of an alternative for human muscle power. The engineers succeeded in the endeavour by making coal an energy resource, contributing millions of mechanical hands to industrial and agricultural sectors, making life without enslaved people possible. Thus slavery as an institution was brought down not by the inherent morality of humankind or by the influence of religious factions but by the emergence of fossil fuels as an energy input.

Accordingly, the geological agency became somehow related to the concept of freedom of humankind. In 1750, this relationship fastened up with the discovery of coal, oil and gas. Dipesh Chakrabarty explicates this in his essay,

"The Climate of History: Four Theses", where he describes how "[t]he mansion of human freedoms stands on an ever-expanding base of fossil-fuel use. Most of our freedoms so far have been energy-intensive" (208).

Stephanie LeMenegar describes this cultural impact oil had on humankind with reference to the American middle class. She describes how the world order bloomed with natural gas and petroleum and the development of social movements like anti-war activism, feminism and environmentalism assumed the presence of an energy that was economical and easy to procure (5). Thus, cheap energy paved the way for the so-called progressive world around.

A similar idea is observable in the words of the environmental historian Dale Jamieson who asserts that "[e]nergy use has been central to the development of human civilisation, society, and economy"(16). He asserts that the history of human development is related to the increased use of energy. "Indeed, we can even think of human history as falling into epochs marked by the human ability to exploit various sources of energy", he continues (16). Yet scholars and academicians in the field of history or humanities neglected oil and disregarded the role played by it in building modern society and culture.

One of the primary reasons for the invisibility of oil is the influence of capitalist ideologies. The consumers of oil are least worried about the process of oil extraction or the politics behind the resource – the wars fought or the treaties made. Even when the whole world seems to be saturated in it, oil seems to be mystically disguised in the public imagination. It is only in the recent past that it has reemerged into the vanguard of discussions, especially with the emergence of concerns over climate change, greenhouse gases and carbon emissions.

The correlation of fossil fuels to climate change and the earth's geological history was brought into mainstream discussion by the Nobel Prize winner Paul J. Crutzen and a marine biologist, Eugene F. Stoermer. Since the nineteenth century, geologists have divided the earth's geological history into eras, epochs and periods. This classification was determined based on the chronological and radiometric dating of the fossil records. In 2000, Crutzen and Stoermer proposed to use the term “anthropocene” for the modern geological era. According to them, this hypothetical geological era was marked by the seminal and decisive part played by human beings.

“Anthropocene” is a word derived from “antropos” which means human, and the Greek word '-cene', which means new. Therefore, “anthropocene” translates as “new human”. Though the source of the expression contains a reference to man, this concept is not anthropocentric. This term sensibly dislocates man from the centre of the universe, charging them with the crime of planetary devastation. Crutzen elaborates on this in his article “Geology of Mankind”, written in 2002.

> For the past three centuries, the effects of humans on the global environment have escalated. Because of these anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide, global climate may depart significantly from natural behaviour for many millennia to come. It seems appropriate to assign the term 'Anthropocene' to the present, in many ways human-dominated, geological epoch, supplementing the Holocene -- the warm period of the past 10-12 millennia. The Anthropocene could be said to have started in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when analyses of air trapped in polar ice showed the beginning of growing global concentrations of

> carbon dioxide and methane. This date also happens to coincide with James Watt's design of the steam engine in 1784. (23)

Thus, Crutzen renders a direct connection between the increased use of fossil fuels and the transformation of the earth. Ascertaining this relationship brought various changes in the physical sciences and social sciences. While the earth scientists who brought up this concept of geographical strata were discussing the probability and possibility of such an era, the field of humanities had already imbibed the concept and the twentieth century saw the rise of the field of Energy Humanities, which tried to connect human beings, fossil fuels and the environment.

Energy Humanities is an interdisciplinary academic discipline that has gained impetus in the last few years. In the introduction to *Energy Humanities: An Anthology*, Imre Szeman and Dominic Boyer describe how energy humanities would

> . . . shed light on the fuel apparatus of modernity, which is all too often invisible or subterranean, but which pumps and seeps into the groundwaters of politics, culture, institutions, and knowledge in unexpected ways. Moreover, energy humanities aspires to provide a speculative impulse as well as critical diagnostics. . . They also probe and surface the contradictions of our contemporary condition, materialising and communicating them in new and provocative ways. (9)

This academic field here gives prominence to energy and is built upon the assumption of the anthropocene. It is based on the fundamental conjecture that energy has played a decisive role in moulding human society and culture. Therefore, it is essential to analyse energy and its role in cultural products like

art and literature. The current study will be based on the broad field of Energy Humanities focusing on Petrocultural theories.

Brent Ryan Bellamy suggests a schema by which a researcher in literature or art can indulge in the field of Energy Humanities. According to him, a researcher can, "1) include energy in the narrative frame of history; 2) locate the signs of energy through close reading; 3) assess trends across a set of digitised texts; 4) return to old archives looking for new finds; 5) read against the text against itself; or, 6) search out the tell-tale absences of energy" (9-10).

The study will follow the second and sixth suggestions put forward by Bellamy. The study will focus on the close reading of those literary works in which oil is present in the physical form and is highly visible. The works of fiction will be chosen from specific geographic zones where oil plays the role of a central protagonist directing and organising life. Nevertheless, as Graeme Macdonald opines, "Its multinational structures, routes, and determinations ensure petrofiction's contemporary identification as a subgenre of literature more productive under the rubric of "world literature" than it is under that of any national literary corpus" ("Oil and World Literature" 7). Thus petrofiction is concurrently universal and domestic and seems to flow freely, occupying distinct space in literature.

However, when an attempt is made to find fictional or literary texts in which oil plays a vital role metaphorically or culturally, the seeker tends to be disappointed. While literature is looked upon as a field that reflects society, fossil fuels tend to have escaped this mirroring paradoxically. Oil seems to have deterred artists and cultural critics from creatively perceiving it. Amitav Ghosh first directed the literary world to this particularity and coined the term,

“Petrofiction” as the title of his review of Abdelrahman Munif's quintet of novels *Cities of Salt* in the issue of *The New Republic in* March 1992. He contended that for various reasons, “the history of oil is a matter of embarrassment verging on the unspeakable, the pornographic” (30). This spurred a lot of cultural critics who began to engage in the question of oil and started analysing the concept of petroculture and petromodernity in artistic and cultural imaginations, which consequently led to the identification and formation of a specific genre of petrofiction.

“Petrofiction” is commonly recognised as a category of literature that incorporates oil in the work's thematic content. Thus petrocritics like LeMenager used this term to define several works like Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) because it represents a specific road culture which is impossible without fossil fuels. However, as Amy Riddle mentions in “Petrofiction and Political Economy in the Age of Late Fossil Capital”, this vague categorisation generates specific problems. She criticises the above definition by pointing out that ‘“petrofiction” is a combination of a material thing (petrol) and a social object (fiction), and the “petro” part of the word does not define or specify “fiction”’ (59). Therefore it is essential to “distinguish between petrofiction as a literary theme and literary genre” (Riddle 60). Accordingly, a fiction could be delegated as “petrofiction” only if the novel's narrative is oil-determined and integral in organising it.

Consequently, petrofiction can be defined in two distinct ways. Firstly it refers to literature that addresses the manufacture, consumption or outcome of petroleum-based energy. Upton Sinclair's *Oil*! (1927), Abdelrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* (1984), Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco* (1992), Mei Mei Evans' *Oil*

and Water (2013) can be cited as examples of this genre of petrofiction wherein oil determines the narrative of the tale. The second category of petrofiction includes speculative literature that envisages a post- petro future. This category includes novels that deal with the collapse of the oil-based civilisation and can be mostly grouped under the genre of science fiction. Steven Amsterdam's *Things We Didn't See Coming* (2008) may be taken as an appropriate example.

As the most recognisable strain of "energy art", this study focuses on extraction narratives, local and global tales of oil's advancement and its spectacular conversion of space, geography and way of life. Stories of corruption and petro- despotism; spill and disaster; the conflict between oil capital and community and commotion about oil prices etc. enacted across international territories can be perceived through petrofiction. Given that the world is becoming more and more oil-dependent, reading petrofiction will enable readers to make sense of this energy resource whose cultural and material existence has remained mystically invisible from dominant psychology for a long time. The research will focus on the fiction of the extractive zones that depict a petromodern world where petrocapitalism often spurs imperceptible violence.

Petromodernity is variously used by scholars to describe, define, and critique the elementary bond between modern life and fossil fuel energy systems. Stephanie LeMenagar employs the term "petromodernity" to signify "a modern life-based in the cheap energy systems long made possible by petroleum"(67). Even though LeMenager's documentation is derived primarily from North American perspectives, it could be easily transported to other areas as the oil environments are always entwined and its effect defies state and geographic perimeters. The other terminologies coined by Stephanie LeMenegar in *Living*

Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century pertaining to the concept of petromodernity are

a. Petrophilia means oil-loving. LeMenager coined this word to describe the attitude of "loving oil to the extent that we have done" (102).
b. Petromelancholia is the gloominess associated with dwindling conventional oil resources. She defines it as "the feeling of loosing cheap energy that came relatively easily, without tar sands extraction, ultradeep ocean drilling, and fracking" (102).
c. Petrotopia, akin to utopia, "represents itself as an ideal end-state, the service economy made flesh" (75). LeMenager defines it as "the processual utopia of free-market ideology", moulded to service capitalism's ideologies. (75)

The current investigation attempts to detect and comprehend the consequences of fossil fuel energy on cultural conduct and behaviour and connect these aspects to the cultural challenges in petromodern societies. This modern culture stimulated by the commercial use of fossil fuels is called oil culture/petroculture.

Ross Barnett and Daniel Worden identify oil culture as "the broad field of cultural representations and symbolic forms that have taken shape around the fugacious material of oil in the 150 years since the inception of the US petroleum industry" (269). In the above definition, Barnett and Worden refer to the discovery of oil in Titusville, Pennsylvania, in 1859, which unbolted a new age of energy extraction and distribution in America. However, the implications of the discovery soon moved beyond the US and engulfed the political and cultural domains of the emerging world. Until this recent academic turn in humanities, oil was looked upon as a physical entity without the presence of which modern

way of life would be impossible. However, with the emergence of petrocultural studies, one might be able to look at oil "as a historical formation rather an unquestionable everyday necessity" (Barnett 272).

In his article titled "Resource Note: Resources of Fiction," Graeme Macdonald describes the objective of petrocultural studies. He asserts that it is crucial to consider the role of oil in a specific environment because it helps readers and critics "to recast the fundamental orientation and relationship of cultural forms to a material life sustained and underpinned by hegemonic forms of energy extraction, production and consumption" (3). Petrocultures Research Group was established in 2011 at the University of Alberta by Imre Szeman and Sheena Wilson to encourage research in this specific field. According to the group's mandate, the topics and themes open for investigation are the following:

- Labour in petrocultures (influx of temporary foreign workers, transient labour forces, the rights or lack thereof of labourers, etc.)
- The composition of communities in historical and contemporary oil economies
- Education in energy societies
- Health
- The intersection of cultural and environmental issues (resource management, water and oil, etc.)
- Indigenous cultures and societies (land and mineral rights, community safety, race in petrocultures, etc.)
- Intersectional impacts of energy systems
- Politics and social-political life in petro-states

- The impacts of all of these issues on forms of cultural production (art, literature, film, etc.) that attempt to represent and address the socio-cultural realities of living alongside oil technologies
- Potential future energy systems and societies ("About Petrocultures")

Consequently, petrocultural studies have unlocked new perspectives for scholars in literary criticism too. Such investigations on crude oil and petromodern culture are more than just "plotting against oil" (LeMenager 123). Patricia Yaeger, in her article, "Editor's Column: Literature in the Ages of Wood, Tallow, Coal, Whale Oil, Gasoline, Atomic Power, and Other Energy Sources", suggests a proposal to arrange literary texts in accordance with the respective energy resource that made it possible. She even lays down some directions for this energy-motivated theory in literature. She enlightens the readers by explicating the concept of energy's relation to a literary work in the following lines.

> This would mean aligning Roth's immigrant meditations on power with Henry Adams's blue-blood musings on "the dynamo and the virgin," or comparing David's coal obsessions with those of Paul, the coal miner's son in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. We might juxtapose Charles Dickens's tallow-burning characters with Shakespeare's, or connect the dots between the fuels used for cooking and warmth in *The Odyssey* and in Gabriel Garcia Márquez's *Cien años de soledad.* (306)

She puts forward certain premises for petrocultural literary criticism, which could be summarised as follows:

1. Various modes of energy resources have been historically used at different times and geographical locations. Thus, anything could be an energy source from cow dung to kerosene.
2. It is difficult to compare the use of different energy resources in different geographical locations. This is because energy use is always uneven.
3. Reading literature with a critical outlook on energy requires more attention to production modes.
4. There should be a shift in the critical reading methodologies when one attempts to read energy texts deeply. (307-309)

This research follows the premises postulated by Patricia Yeager with particular reference to modes of production and cultural divergence in geographical location. Along with the above premises, the present study will also emphasise the importance of production space or the abundant oil spaces where oil extraction happens. Such an emphasis is necessary for petroculture studies as crude oil resources are not spread out evenly on the earth's surface. As a result, fossil fuel is unevenly produced, extracted, purified, transported, and utilised globally. This leads to the generation of susceptible populations scattered around the globe subject to oil imperialism, dispossession, cultural bereavement and environmental degradation, which are all a byproduct of oil capitalism/ petrocapitalism.

"Oil capitalism" is a term introduced into the petrocultural discourse by Imre Szeman in "System Failure: Oil, Futurity, and the Anticipation of Disaster". According to him, this discovery "enabled powerful and forceful new modalities of capitalist reproduction and expansion" (2). Another term used synonymously with 'oil capitalism' is 'petrocapitalism'. *The Oxford Dictionary of Human*

Geography describes it as "a form of capital accumulation founded on the extraction, distribution, and consumption of petroleum"(Rogers 527). The term refers to the globalised economy whose energy needs, industrial production and profit generation depend on oil and other fossil fuels. It may also describe any nation whose dependence on oil exports determines the economy and political institutions of the state. The analysis will use both terms concurrently throughout the chapters.

As one comprehends it today, the capitalist world economy stems from oil. Szeman elucidates how a world devoid of oil capital is inconceivable.

> From oil flows capitalism as we still know it: the birth of the first giant multinationals—Standard Oil (whose component elements still persist in Exxon Mobil, Texaco, and British Petroleum), DuPont, and the Big Three automobile makers; the defining social system of private transportation—cars, air travel, freeways, and with these, suburbs, "white flight," malls, inner-city ghettoisation, and so on; and the environmental and labor costs that come with access to a huge range of relatively inexpensive consumer goods, most of which contain some product of the petrochemical industry (plastics, artificial fibers, paints, etc.) and depend on the possibility of mass container shipping. No petroleum, no modern war machine, no global shipping industry, no communication revolution. ("System Failure" 2)

Thus oil and capital are inherently connected and to envisage a new world order without fossil power is relatively impossible.

There are three critical elements of petrocapitalism identified by George Caffentzis in his work *No Blood for Oil: Energy, Class Struggle,and War: 1998-*

2004. Firstly he identifies oil as a commodity. Being a capitalist commodity, its aim is not simply to ensure or satisfy human needs but to generate profit. Consequently, if a profit cannot be churned out from oil, it will not be produced. Secondly, since oil is involved directly or indirectly in the production of almost all other consumer commodities, alteration and fluctuation in the production of oil prices change the prices, wages and profit revenue of all other commodities in the international capitalist system. Therefore, oil is the subject of interest to the capitalists, nation-states, and ordinary people. Thirdly, the production process of fossil fuel is featured by the lower organic composition of capital. Thus one requires relatively little human labour and large amounts of land and equipment to take possession of and control oil capital.

The above-mentioned vital feature in the production process of fossil fuels subsequently produces other forms of conflicts, namely between the resource owners and the tenants, between the non-state owners and the state or between the central state landowners and different class elements. For instance, the land for excavation may belong to an individual. The tenants who are the private or state-owned oil companies might have conflicts about the ownership claim and right to control with the individual. The state may have a dispute with the non-state landowners over the amount of taxation levied on rental income. The state-landowners may disagree with different social classes over the rents received and their social distribution.

Ian Rutledge identified this and pinpointed two relevant and unique features of petrocapitalism that distinguish it from manufacturing capitalism. Petrocapitalism, in contrast to other forms of capitalism, requires access to landed property. This means “that oil companies must accommodate themselves

to a set of customary rules and arrangements concerning the governance of access to this property and the subsoil resources underlying it" (Rutledge 3). Historically the state has always preserved the right to land, including the minerals rooted in it. These rights are fundamentally of three types- the right to taxation, the right to retract the right to land assets already granted and the right to control, monitor and regulate. If the oil company is under colonial domination, then the colonial country's oil companies will have to pay a royalty to the colonial country or the native rulers. Thus petrocapitalism is closer to agrarian capitalism than to manufacturing capitalism.

Another feature recognised by Rutledge is what he describes as the "territorial imperative"(4). The term suggests the distinctive feature of petrocapitalism, which requires the oil companies to shift their operations from territory to territory persistently in a quest for new oil reserves to replace the depleted reserves. If oil companies fail to do so, this will affect the company's cash flow and profit as oil capitalism tends to exhaust the land on which it depends. This put the oil capitalists in conflict with the oil-producing communities and the sovereign state.

Along with this occurs social and class inequity. A capitalist society is characterised by two major rival classes defined by their economic positions: the capitalists and the proletariats. As the dominant class, the capitalists own or control the means of production and instruments of distribution and have the power to determine the course of consumption and exchange. On the other hand, the proletariats do not have the agency to control any substantial property. They become subjects who work according to the interests of the capitalist class and

are therefore subject to political, economic and social exploitation and domination.

The structure of capitalist work relations thus presents an exploitative relationship where the relationship between the employer and the employed becomes discordant and tense. Therefore the capitalist system is by nature violent. As Caffentzis opines, capitalism is nothing but a war between classes: “Capitalism is so connected with the forms of war that wars can be identified as profit, wage, interest or rent wars instead of being categorised as those between or within states” (121). Paradoxically, the oil industry that is simultaneously dependent on the newest technological innovations and in the accidents of earth's geology is organised in a warlike scenario. Oil facilities are guarded and protected by an alliance of foreign, state and private security personnel. While capitalism, by its disposition, is a violent system prone to exploitation and conflicts, petro-capitalism/ oil capitalism produces more severe challenges, incongruities and hostility. The Marxian theories will aid the research in investigating such class conflicts.

Though not a comprehensive repercussion of petrocapitalism, one significant conflict visible in the oil state pertains to petro-sexual politics. Heather M. Turcotte, in her article “Contextualizing Petro-Sexual Politics”, describes petro- sexual politics as an investigation into “the moments of violence, within nation-building projects, that intimately link petroleum production, the global circuits of oil and gender–sexual violence” (200). According to her, “Women are constantly negotiating through multiple forms of petro-violence, including intense forms of gender and sexual violence enacted by security forces of the state and those connected with multinational oil

companies" (Turcotte 203). In addition to this is women's absence or negligible visibility in labour-intensive extractive oil terrains.

As Sheena Wilson opines, women's rapport with oil and ecology is portrayed only in a superficial manner, "first, through embedded feminism and women's rights as they intersect with human and ethno cultural rights; second, through consumerism; and third, through the recuperation of the female body as a canvas on which to spectacularize politics—largely with explicit consumer aim"(224). This study will concentrate on reading the select petrofictions with the aid of the feminist lens.

Accordingly, the research will concentrate on these concepts of petrocapitalism and the conflicts it produces in the strategic locations of America, Middle East and Africa. Since the dawn of Western capitalism and European imperialism, the people of the oil states have been forced to adhere to a capitalist system that conceives the Western model as a quintessential structure for progress and growth. This legitimises the power of Western capitalists to govern certain oil resource zones and exploit their resources to the advantage of multinational conglomerates and a few elite associates who dominate the means of production. In fact, the politics of crude oil is always intertwined with neocolonial schemas and privileges which favour the powerful. Therefore the concept of petrocapitalism and petroculture cannot be thoroughly analysed without considering the concept of the resource curse.

Resource Curse refers to the ironic situation of a state in which the state exists to be politically, economically and socially fragile despite the rich resources it is encompassed with. The term was coined by Richard Auty in his work, *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse*

Thesis. According to Richard Auty, “a favourable natural resource endowment may be less beneficial to countries at low- and mid-income levels of development than the conventional wisdom might suppose” (1). Michael Ross in “The Oil Curse” argues that the resource curse, when analysed precisely, is unerringly a mineral curse. The mismanagement in politics or economics is not evident in countries with abundant forest resources or fertile croplands. According to Ross, oil is the one culprit that creates problems for most nations. He, therefore, infers that “[t]he resource curse is overwhelmingly an oil curse” (24). The United States is an exception to this. However, it remains an unsolved conundrum for the low and middle-income countries. Accordingly, “the oil states are 50 percent more likely to be ruled by autocrats and more than twice as likely to have civil wars as the non-oil states. They are also more secretive, more financially volatile, and provide women with fewer economic and political opportunities” (Ross 24). Here, the resource curse theory seems to be blind to the environment's plight. Nevertheless, in all the extraction spaces discussed, the unethical relationship between the state and the petro-capitalists leads to ecological injuries.

These ecological injuries in oil spaces are profound, especially at production places. One should look at these production sites as the “sacrifice zones” of petromodernity. The term was first used by Valerie Kuletz, who coined the phrase “geographies of sacrifice” in her book, *The Tainted Desert* (1998), to describe the disproportionate effects of the Cold War on indigenous communities in the United States. According to Naomi Klein, extractive “sacrifice zones” refer to “places that, to their extractors, somehow do not count and therefore can be poisoned, drained, or otherwise destroyed, for the supposed greater good of

economic progress" (155). She also plainly articulates how sacrifice zones are directly bound to the concept of racial superiority. She explains, "to have sacrifice zones, you need to have people and cultures who count so little that they are considered deserving of sacrifice" (155).

Rob Nixon describes inhabitants of these marginalised areas as "disposable people". According to him, these people encompass "a compendious category subject to almost infinite local variation as well as to fracture fault lines of ethnicity, gender, race, class, region, religion and generation" who have to face "militarisation of both commerce and development" and is often "assailed by coercion and bribery" (4). Therefore the 'resource rebels' who emerge from these spaces have a different mode of environmentalism which is dependent on their cultural and economic existence. They understand and witness "environmental threat not as a planetary abstraction but as a set of inhabited risks, some imminent, others obscurely long term" (4).

Rob Nixon brings in this issue of violence in his seminal work *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Basically, oil perpetuates both biological and social violence. According to Michael Watts, Petro-violence describes the struggles over the control of oil reserves. This violence is funded by oil revenues and can be biological and social. Here biological violence signifies the violence committed against the biophysical world, whereas social violence indicates "criminality and degeneracy associated with the genesis of petro-wealth and its ecological destructiveness" (Watts 1). According to Watts oil initiates violence due to several reasons.

a) Oil is wealth

b) The transition of a nation into a petro-state which corrupts the state.

c) The emergence of oil-imperialism where in the petro-state associates itself with an imperial power affecting the autonomy of the petro-state.
d) Relocation of indigenous population from the extractive zones.
e) Interweaving of politics with oil capitalism which leads to petro-politics.
f) The El Dorado effect or the belief in the exuberance of oil wealth which leads to affluence without effort
g) Conflict over the control of the oil commodity.

Rob Nixon explores this notion of violence and establishes the concept of slow violence. According to Nixon, slow violence is a "violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (2). Violence is customarily envisaged as an incident or act that is instantaneous and spectacular which produces cataclysmic impacts. Slow violence, in contrast, is not spectacular and therefore invisible and not newsworthy. However, its impact is attritional and exponential. It can create long-term problems in which "casualties are postponed, often for generations" (Nixon 2). These causalities can be emotional, environmental, or physical.

The study will specifically concentrate on the slow violence in the extraction sacrifice zones scattered around the globe. According to *EXTRACTION*, an interdisciplinary research project embarked on by the University of California in 2017,

> Extraction designates capitalism's fundamental logic of *withdrawal*—of value, nutrients, energy, labor, time—from people, lands, culture, life-forms, the elements, without corresponding deposit (except as externalities of non-value in the form of pollution, waste, climate change,

> illness, and death). It forms hierarchies of power around divisions that are racially, ethnically, sexually, and ecologically inscribed. ("Extraction: Decolonial Visual Cultures in the Age of the Capitalocene")

Nevertheless, there is usually not much scientific enquiry done to understand the reasons, outcomes and potential amendments required in these extraction zones. This is because it is often the poor communities who are confronted with slow violence in these terrains, and therefore they attract little concern, and the hazards are often unacknowledged. They are often considered "dispensible citizens" (Jalais 11). Furthermore, they have to face either of the two prospects as a community. Firstly the jeopardised community yields to the pressure of the capitalist social system and is relocated, thereby scattering themselves in refugee camps, unsolicited foreign lands or less friendly environments. Alternately the community might refuse to succumb and therefore refuse to move out of their land. Rob Nixon refers to the second case as "displacement without moving" or "stationary displacement" (19). Here, the community has to encounter the damage caused to the land and other natural resources around them, making the familiar space less familiar and uninhabitable. Both forms of displacement can be witnessed in the oil states. The study analyses these kinds of displacement faced by the disposable people of the oil sacrifice zones and determine the effects and traumas that occur as part of this displacement.

In fact, such petro-dispossessions and displacements could lead to post-traumatic stress disorders and environmentally induced traumas like "solastalgia". The term solastalgia, was coined by Australian environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht to illustrate the inimitable psychological angst

instigated by the encounter with negative environmental change. It originates from the Latin word *solacium,* meaning comfort and Greek word, which means pain. According to Albrecht, this is a psycho-terratic trauma based on the "existential and lived experience of negative environmental change"(38). Considered an inveterate condition, it is "characteristically a chronic condition, tied to the gradual erosion of identity created by the sense of belonging to a particular loved place and a feeling of distress, or psychological desolation, about its unwanted transformation" (Albrecht 39).

Therefore, as already mentioned, the thesis is an attempt to focus on the less visible genre of petrofiction, focusing on the concepts of petromodernity, petrocapitalism, resource curse, trauma, and slow violence. The investigation will highlight the collective suffering of the "ecosystem people". The ecosystem people depend for their livelihood on modest resource areas (Nixon 22). These ecosystem people tend to end up as environmental refugees, both physically and psychologically, in the neo-colonial petro-capitalist set-up. However, the central conflict in each of these territories is that its subject "lies near to trauma as well as desire" (LeMenager 17). Though oil is considered the "resource curse" in the popular eco-centric economic discourse, it acts as the indispensable black gold without which economic prosperity and social well-being will be impossible.

Frederick Buell had discussed this ambivalent nature of crude oil in his work, "A Short History of Oil Cultures, Or the Marriage of Catastrophe and Exuberance". He estimates exuberance and catastrophe as persisting motifs in an oil space. According to Buell, the age of exuberance was stimulated by the oil culture, wherein the energy accumulated underground is tunneled up and utilised, creating optimism and a new form of a world structured around oil.

While ‘exuberance’ signifies the positive appraisal during the early age of extraction, linking crude oil to progress and social advancement, the concept of ‘catastrophe’ has a sceptical estimation of the resource, considering it as a prospective threat to society and ecology.

The study will be conducted on five literary texts which narrate the tales of three different crude oil arenas in the world oil map: America, the Arabian Peninsula and Nigeria. All these 'sacrifice areas' have experienced capitalistic imperialist power, leading to the indigenous population's displacement, loss of ecological wealth, conflict, hostilities, and exploitation of the vulnerable. However, all the three territories are dependent on oil and oil revenues, making their relationship with the fuel more problematic. The analysis will highlight the concept of 'commodity regionalism' put forward by Stephanie LeMenager to identify the role played by oil in the specific regions. This is because regions are “more socially and economically significant — in some respects more so than nations—when globalisation assumed its mature form in the late twentieth century” (LeMenager 13).

World Crude Oil history began along a creek in remote northwestern Pennsylvania, America, on August,1859. However, American popular imagination could not incorporate oil into its cultural fabric for long. Upton Sinclair's *Oil!*, published in 1926, opened up a discussion on oil excavation and its repercussions on the social and economic structure, followed by a contented silence from the oil culture industry. Only in the twenty-first century and with peak oil's emergence, oil becomes fashionable in significant literary dialogues. While analysing this particular oil arena, the researcher will focus on two literary texts- Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* and Jennifer Haigh's *Heat and Light.*

Linda Hogan, a Chickasaw mixed-blood writer with dual inheritance, born on July 16, 1947, is the current Chickasaw Nation's Writer in residence. The influence of her paternal family in Oklahoma, who belonged to the Chickasaw community and her upbringing in a diverse Indian community in the Denver area is reflected in her novels which often depict cross-cultural borders to reveal the ethnic annihilation made invisible in the dominant white discourses. As Hogan remarks in her memoir, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*, "Indians came to represent spirit, heart, an earth-based way of living, but the true stories of our lives were, and are still, missing from history, the geography of our lands changed" (60).

Her first novel, *Mean Spirit*, which interweaves fact with fiction, is set in the 1920s in the Osage territory of Oklahoma during the oil boom in America. The novel revolves around two indigenous families in the state of Watona – The Blankets and the Grayclouds, who are the victims of the insatiable greed propounded by oil capitalism. "The novel explores the varying ways in which its Osage characters struggle to define "home" and "place" while attempting to live in a borrowed and broken land" with an oil river surging beneath (Blair 16). The novel combines fact with fiction to expose how oil disposed off the ethnic minority from its rightful spaces.

Meanwhile, the second book for analysis from the US, Jennifer Haigh's *Heat and Light* is located in the fictional city of Bakerton, a fading coal town in Pennsylvania. Haigh's own experience being raised in Barnesboro, a Pennsylvanian coal town, shaped the imaginary region and its characters. As she claims in her interview with Ellyn Gaydos, "I grew up in northern Appalachia, in a mining town that, like Bakerton, was named after a coal company… After I

grew up and moved away, I saw it in a different light, and I knew that I would have to write about it" ("Writing the Soul of a Place: An Interview With Jennifer Haigh"). In fact, she had set her earlier novel, *Baker Tower,* in the town of Bakerton, where coal mines prospered, and every home had at least one person who worked in the mine.

In contrast, *Heat and Light* discusses the technologically innovative hydraulic fracking and unwrap the "perversity of addictive behaviour" towards fossil fuel energy consumption in the capitalist world (Foster). As the author remarks in the interview with Marc Foster, "energy production puts a hurt on the planet, and yet we're hooked on the rewards", creating more altruistic terrains (Foster). In the novel, Bobby Frame acts as the capitalist agent who lures Shelby and Rich Delvin into leasing their backyard for fracking. The novel details the conflicts faced by the Delvin family and the various strategies followed by the capitalists in association with the government in making oil revenue. As the author remarks, "*Heat and Light* is a story about corporate power, how our lives are shaped by large forces—economic and political—we understand incompletely or not at all"(Gaydos).

The Persian Gulf and its coastal areas are the world's largest single source of crude oil. At the end of World War I, the Arab states of the Gulf were weak, with faltering economies and with the local head of states that preserved their sovereignty only with foreign assistance. The discovery of oil in the region changed this dependence and the Gulf countries became an integral part of the world capitalist plot. The primary oil states in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), namely Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar are rentier states. Accordingly, most of their income is generated from fossil fuels instead of

taxation. This leads to a lot of transformations and regulations in the oil terrain. This study will consider the first book from the quintet by Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt* to understand these alterations in the Gulf countries' economic and social life in specific oil extraction zones.

Abdelrahman bin Ibrahim al-Munif born on 29 May 1993 was one of the significant Arab novelists of Saudi Arabian origin. He is known to have liberated Arab literature from traditional bondages, leading it into a more modernist conduit. He severely criticised the oligarchic government of Saudi Arabia and the policies they made. His doctoral degree in oil economics and his experience working in several oil companies helped him identify his land's specific geopolitical scenario. According to him, “The twentieth century is almost over, but when the West looks at us all they see is oil and petro-dollars. Saudi Arabia is still without a constitution, the people are deprived of all elementary rights, even the right to support the regime without asking for permission” (qtd in Ali, “Kingdom of Corruption”,15). Such vehement condemnation of the government in his works had led him to lose his Saudi citizenship.

Cities of Salt is set in the Middle East, in the fictional kingdom of Mooran, and is extolled by Amitav Ghosh as the paramount model of petrofiction. The study concentrates on the first book, originally titled *Al-Tih*, known to English readers by the title of the quintet, *Cities of Salt*. Set in the extractive site of Wadi al-Uyon and the oil installation region of Harran, the rendition of the novel, provides the reader with an insight into how sacrifice zones are created. The novel is written in an episodic manner analogous to *The Arabian Nights*. As a result, there is an absence of a protagonist in the novel. Even though Miteb al-Hathal, the patriarchal chief of the Bedouin community in

the Wadi, can be suggested as the novel's central character, he disappears with the destruction of the valley, and ‘oil’ seems to take the principal position. Through the intervallic narration, Munif narrates the different facets of the journey of crude oil and oil capitalism in the oligarchic state.

Africa is a crucial territory on the global oil map. The petroleum industry in Nigeria is the largest on the African continent. Yet, the Niger Delta has always been a space of conflict between foreign oil corporations and the Niger Delta's minority ethnic groups, who feel they are being exploited. Competition for oil wealth has invigorated violence between ethnic groups, causing ethnic mercenaries, military and police forces to militarise the entire territory. This underprivileged stature of the ordinary people of the Delta is reflected in the words of Rob Nixon, who remarks, “Who could have dreamed in 1958 that four decades and $600 billion of oil revenues later, some 90 million Nigerians would be surviving on less than a dollar a day?” (106). Here, the literary texts act as a means of protest which attempts to depict the social and environmental deprivation of the Niger Delta by petro-elites. The study explores Helon Habila’s *Oil on Water* (2010) and Kaine Agary’s *Yellow-Yellow* (2006) to understand the oil curse enveloping the Niger Delta. It provides a unique transom into the battle between environmental and economic existences in a world ruled by oil.

Helon Habila, born in 1967, was a Nigerian writer with a faculty for graphic narrations. Habila, in his poems and novels, deals with a myriad of problems perturbing Nigeria, particularly concerning the issues of corruption, poverty, and the irresponsible military regime, as evident in *Waiting for Angels* and *Travellers*. In *Oil on Water*, published in 2010, he deliberates on the effect

of gas flaring, oil spillage and oil theft in the wetlands of the Niger Delta. According to Habila, "The problems of environmental pollution and extraction are pretty much the same everywhere in the world… It is the same in America, Russia, Venezuela, and Saudi Arabia" (Woodburry).

The plot of Habila's *Oil on Water* revolves around the kidnapping of Isabel Floode, the wife of a British oil engineer. The tale is revealed through the narrative of Rufus, a journalist, who gives a graphic description of the abandoned and burnt-out villages, the vicious military chief and the revolutionary leader known to the general public as Professor. According to LeMenager, "Habila conceives of journalism in *Oil on Water* as a means of imposing narrative coherence on ecological and social conditions so chaotic as to be illegible even to those who ordinarily live with them"(125).

Kaine Agary was a Nigerian novelist who spent her childhood in Port Harcourt, experiencing the politics and ecology of oil. Even though she had written research articles about women in Nigeria, with particular attention to Niger Delta for developmental organisations, creative writing was a venture she never attempted until she met Nigerians who were uninformed about the sacrificial crude oil terrains that existed in their own country. In an interview with *Geosi Reads,* she describes how "*Yellow-Yellow* was [her] response to the frustration [she] felt from meeting many Nigerians who were ignorant of the issues in the Niger-Delta and why there was so much agitation in the late 1990s".

Yellow-Yellow won the ANA/Chevron Prize for Environmental Writing in 2007 and the Nigeria Prize for Literature in 2008. It narrates the socio-cultural and political effects of fossil fuel excavation in the Niger Delta, providing significant attention to women and ecology being exploited and contaminated by

the patriarchal capitalist ideology in the petromodern world. Through the narrator-protagonist, Zilayefa, Agary criticises the repressive dictatorship of Sani Abacha and presents the petroviolence present in the oil state. Zilayefa, a biracial girl, represents the young women in the Delta who believe their fate depends on moving to the oil city of Harcourt.

The thesis bases its premise on the discussed petrocultural and environmental justice theories. The study will be based on the hypothesis that petromodernity and petrocapitalism in the extractive territories lead to slow violence. However, the effects on resource-blighted sacrifice zones are diverse and depend on the nation-state's socio-cultural backdrop. The investigation is an attempt to answer the following research problems.

1. Significance of oil discovery in the discussed oil extraction zones.
2. Divergent demaneanor of petromodernity in diverse oil terrains.
3. The emergence and consequence of petrocapitalism in an oil state.
4. Class and gender discordance in a petrocapitalist nation.
5. Diverse manner in which petroviolence is perpetuated on the oil community.
6. Effect of slow and spectacular violence on the people and environment in the extraction zones.

Petrofiction is concurrently global and local. Akin to the crude oil resource, petrofiction too is asymmetrically developed and distributed around the world. The readership is also varied due to the hegemonical and hierarchical manner literature travels worldwide. This presents a "geocultural challenge for anyone interested in tracking and connecting the wide range of the oil imaginary" (MacDonald "Oil and World Literature" 7). The research attempts to make sense

of the globalised oil scenario by comprehending each geographical oil terrain separately. The chapters are also divided with this motive.

The second chapter, "Capitalism in Pursuit of Oil: Manifestation of Petromodernity in the US", is devoted to the select novels in the American oil state, specifically Pennsylvania, namely Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* and Jennifer Haigh's *Heat and Light*. Being the first region where oil was discovered commercially, the region possesses a significant space in the geographical oil map. The backdrop and milieu of both the novels chosen for analysis are divergent, providing the study with scope to understand the varied manner in which oil asserts its hegemonic power in distinct cultural and time spaces.

Following the timeline, the analysis studies the novel from the Gulf region in the third chapter, "Hydrocarbon Cities: Petrotopia in the Gulf". The tacit neo-colonisation of the Gulf by the American oil capitalists was an immediate effect of American oil consumerism. In the chapter, the research focuses on Abdelrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* which is set in a fictional Middle East territory. The attempt is to comprehend how the utopia promised in the region is discounted and instead a petrotopia is created to comply with the demands of the oil empire and the petro-elites.

The fourth chapter, "Disenchanted Oil Fairy Tales: Petro-Violence and Social Justice in the Niger Delta", probes into the oil terrain of Niger Delta, one of the most wounded oil regions in the world. Both the populace and the ecology are governed by the oil leviathan who strangulates them to death, both symbolic and physical. The chapter examines two novels, Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow,* to unlock the violence and injustice reigning in the region.

The concluding fifth chapter discusses the similarities and differences in each oil terrain and answers the questions raised in the introductory chapter. The chapter provides a comprehensive and comparative analysis of the concepts of oil capitalism, petromodernity and petroviolence in varied sacrifice zones spread across the globe. The final chapter, *Limitations and Recommendations*, pinpoints the study's constraints and proposes suggestions to conduct further investigations in energy humanities, specifically petrocultural studies.

Even though oil is produced due to natural geological processes, the human-guided extraction processes like the pumping, the rigging, the refining, the grading and transporting and its further uses in automobiles, electricity, and plastics are all cultural. Therefore, as remarked by Allen Stoekl in *Oil Culture*,

> Oil is the ultimate natural-cultural artifact. Once it ceases to be gunk in the ground, it is what we do with it. And yet it is an agent as well: it calls to us, and we respond to its entreaties, its interpellations. It is the ultimate siren's song, the ultimate Eurydice we reach for—as it disappears. We are the slaves of our energy slaves, in a surprising (to us) revision of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic. We work to further oil's consumption, imagining ever more wasteful "uses" for it—from lavish oil-heated homes to gas-guzzling Hummers. We cannot help but realise that in some sense we are oil: all those grain-fed cattle we eat, themselves fed with cereals grown with fossil-fuel–derived fertilisers, and protected by oil-based pesticides; all the water purified and pumped with the use of fossil fuels; all the wars powered and won with fossil fuels (not least the wars for control of oil resources). And we are the disappearance of oil. We are human, social, cultural—that is, we are not formed by a god, we form,

> make, ourselves—but we are also what we have done with oil.(Barrett xii-xiii)

Having given an elaborate introduction to the importance of oil, energy humanities, petroculture and petrocapitalism, which lead to the resource curse, slow violence and sacrifice zones, the five select novels for study are familiarized, after which the research moves to the second chapter titled, "Capitalism in Pursuit of Oil: Manifestation of Petromodernity in the US".

CHAPTER II

Capitalism in Pursuit of Oil: Manifestation of Petromodernity in the US

"Oil is civilisation's subtext" (Gillmor 103)

In 1851, Herman Melville published the great American Renaissance novel, *Moby Dick*. The work was accepted and celebrated as revenge fiction, a neurotic quest of Ahab seeking vengeance on a giant white sperm whale. Several later writers admired the work, including D.H. Lawrence, who described the work as "the greatest book of the sea ever written" (146). Yet, Melville's contemporaries and literary critics fell short in identifying the crucial point which related this classic to American Industrial history. Why did the harpooners go deep into the Pacific to catch the whale? The answer to this question connects the text to the energy history of the period.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, spermaceti or sperm whale oil obtained from the blubber of sperm whales, was considered an ideal fuel source. It lit lamps, lubricated machinery, and played a vital role in initiating the industrial revolution. However, with the civil war, the price of whale oil increased, making it inaccessible to the ordinary person. The expensive shipping and workforce and the disappearing whale population made oil extraction a hard energy choice. Even though other animal fats and vegetable oils were experimented with to replace whale oil, they were unsuccessful.

In this historical context, crude oil caught the interest of energy seekers. Even in earlier ages, petroleum was used as a lubricant and energy source. It was even supposed to have medicinal properties. However, until the nineteenth-century crude oil did not get much attention. In the late nineteenth century, the

modern petroleum industry emerged in Russia, Romania, Canada, etc. The US oil industry in Pennsylvania and West Virginia was at the forefront. Edwin Drake's oil well situated in Titusville, Pennsylvania, is considered the first modern oil well, setting the current crude oil industry in motion. This was indeed a crowning developmental juncture for an impecunious agrarian city like Pennsylvania, which had several tribal territories, including the Apache, Arapaho, Caddo, Comanche, Kiowa, Osage and the Wichita tribes. As years elapsed, Pennsylvania's buried treasure of fossil energy became a significant territory on the world energy map.

> MORE THAN MOST PLACES, Pennsylvania is what lies beneath . Accidents of geology, larger than history, older than scripture: continents colliding, seas encroaching and receding, peat bogs incubating their treasures like a vast subterranean kiln. In the time before recorded time, Pennsylvania was booby-trapped. (Haigh 426)

Thus Pennsylvania remained the leading supplier of crude oil in the world market from the nineteenth century to the present. It reigns from the easy oil period to the current tough oil period, wherein the techniques varied from drilling to fracking. This chapter attempts to identify and analyse the concepts of petro modernity, petro capitalism, and environmental justice based on political ecology through two fictional texts – Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* and Jennifer Haigh's *Heat and Light*- which are set in two different oil eras.

Firstly, the study will explore how oil discovery and industrial extraction in the Native Indian territory affected the community and land with reference to Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit,* which narrates the story of the oil-rich Osage people of Oklahoma. This fictional work can be read as an ethnohistory of the Osage

tribe during the early twentieth century. Before venturing into the analysis of the fictional text it is crucial to comprehend the history of the Osage tribe and their unforeseen material prosperity.

The Osages, a native American tribe, lived and prospered in the Great Plains of Kansas, until the white settlers displaced them. They were forced to move to Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, which appeared to be a flinty and insignificant reservation. Decades after, the land was detected to have been geologically consecrated with the greatest riches of the contemporary world, oil. Through the clauses set in the treatise, the tribe acquired the mineral rights to the territories, making it necessary for the oil prospectors to make payments for leases and royalties.

The Indian Territory Illuminating Oil Company acquired the first oil lease in 1896. Henry Foster, the company's proprietor, had a ten-year blanket lease, which was later renewed. Soon the company lost the blanket lease and the tribe started auctioning the lease of the land to the highest bidder. The Osage oil territory was owned and held in a trust by the US government according to the Osage Allotment Act of 1906. The leases were paid as royalties to the tribe in which each person on the tribal roll received a share or headright. This headright was inheritable. The mineral rights were passed on to their direct legal heir if a person or allottee expired. Strangely, no clause in the act stressed that the legatee should belong to the Osage tribe. Anybody could inherit the Osage headright. The fate of the Osage tribe was thus transformed in an unanticipated manner.

> The Osage were considered the wealthiest people per capita in the world. "Lo Behold!" the New York weekly Outlook exclaimed. . . Reporters tantalised their readers with stories of the "plutocratic Osage" and the

> "red millionaires," with their brick- and- terra-cotta mansions and chandeliers, with their diamond rings and fur coats and chauffeured cars. One writer marveled at Osage girls who attended the best boarding schools. (Grann 96)

However, this prosperity and affluence were malicious and disparaging. The viciousness was brought to the forefront when a series of murders happened in the Osage country between 1910 and 1930. The murderers were enthused by the monetary benefit brought by the death of the Osage native, who enjoyed oil royalty. The petro violence reached its peak during the period between 1921 and 1926 when twenty-seven natives were reported to be murdered. This period is referred to as the Reign of Terror. David Grann in his *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI* describes the period as scary. "There were shootings, there were poisonings, one man was thrown off a speeding train, there was a bombing"(Grann 105). Hogan herself describes this in her interview with Barbara J.Cook.

> With *Mean Spirit*, much of it was family history, but I completely fictionalized the place. It is in reality a grassland, but I made it much like the area around my family allotment lands. This bothers people, but it is fiction and that is hard to accept. The murders are real, as are the names of the killers. Some of the children of survivors knew the killers. They were let out of jail early, and two women in Ponca city told me they had lived near them all their lives and not known. ("An Interview with Linda Hogan" 112)

She sets her novel against the backdrop of these oil murders. It narrates the story of the ecosystem people who were suddenly forced into a petro-modern

society. Petro modernity, as discussed earlier, refers to modern life made possible by fossil fuel energy systems. For the characters represented in the novel, oil is synonymous with modernity and better life at multiple levels. Fossil fuel is not just a form of energy, it is a culturally active entity. The emergence of this petro-modern culture can be traced to the lives of the characters in the novel.

For Grace Blanket and Sara Blanket, the daughters of the river prophet, Lila Blanket, modernity embraced their life even before oil became apparently visible. Lila Blanket, who heard the river's voice across the earth, offers her children to the “limbo between the worlds”(Hogan 7). The sisters were mesmerised by “ the world of automobiles and blonde people”, and soon Lila grasped that the alternate world she brought her daughters was “ a magnet of evil that attracted and held her good daughters”(Hogan 7).

The world of automobiles described by Hogan in the initial pages of the novel portrays the petromodern world swathed in the book. Presumably, the automobile industry is closely connected to the American oil industry. As Catherine Zuromskis opines, the “ubiquitous automobile culture” which emerges as an offshoot of oil culture has “dramatically altered the land and our relation to it in the modern and contemporary age” (Barrett 290). During the twentieth century, the United States led the world in adopting the automobile. In 1900, the United States had about 8,000 passenger cars in circulation. By 1930, it had over 23 million, out of a world total of about 29 million. The petroleum industry was somewhat surprised and struggled to produce enough gasoline, which in the 19th century had been treated as a waste product (Vassiliou 3).

The text testifies to the prominence of automobiles in the native Indian territory during the period. Michael Horse, the water diviner, is described as

riding a gold-platted car. This cannot be considered a mere eccentricity of the oil-rich native, but as an instance of the lifestyle, they chose. Thus the author describes how on "South Street alone there were two powder-blue Ford roadsters with tooled leather seats, five Lincolns, three Cadillacs"(Hogan 12).

The rise of "automobility" as the symbol of the middle-class culturally assisted the ordinary citizens in negotiating and renegotiating the concept of individualism. "Automobility" as a term, "constitutes the act of driving and all of those components that make driving possible, practical, empowering, fun, salutary, and imperative"(Seiler 19). In his *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America*, Cotton Seiler describes this period between 1895 and the 1920s as the early decades of automobility. This was a period when political institutions, the economy, the landscape, and cultural life were directed by automobiles.

For the Osage people, the fossil fuel regime provided them with solid wealth and opened to them the petromodern reality of "automobility" which would have been otherwise unaffordable if not for the black gold buried under their feet. Thus there were episodes described wherein a Native Indian bought " a new automobile because the old one was stuck somewhere out in the mud" (Hogan 56). Thus the geological blessing aided them in locating an extravagant space in the emerging petromodern culture. Yet, this culture had a metaphysical influence on the lives of the natives.

Michael Horse, the water diviner and the protector of the sacred fire of the Hill Indians, seemed to be affected by the oil-driven automobile revolution. Even his dreams were affected, blinding his metaphysical ability of vision and feeling. Hogan gives the readers two reasons as to why he had lost his power of

divination. Firstly the extraction sites where drilling happened made him "restless and weary" (Hogan 40). Secondly, it "was easy to lose when new shiny cars honked on the dirt roads" (Hogan 40). This loss of the power of prophecy in Michael Horse could be symbolically read as the loss of foresight and farsightedness in the native Indians in the world reigned by oil.

Nevertheless, the natives immersed in the oil-driven automobile revolution seemed to be utterly oblivious to this. Both the fossil fuel and automobile revolution were unanticipated by the characters in the novel. In the 1900s when each Osage native was given a choice to choose their piece of land allotment, Grace and Sara chose 320 acreages of infertile land together. Belle Graycloud, their aunt, was upset when she saw the ground and said to Grace, "It's barren land, what barren, useless land"(Hogan 8). But soon oil was discovered under the earth's surface, converting "The Barren Land" to "The Barron Land" (Hogan 8).

Grace Blanket was trying to drill a water well when the oil surfaced: "just the thick black fluid that has no use at all for growing corn or tomatoes. Not even zucchini squash would grow there"(Hogan 8). However, soon the lease checks and royalty money flowed in. Along with it came the opulent lifestyle wherein Grace "moved into a house with Roman columns" with a grand piano which ironically ended up as a home for roosting hens(Hogan 9). She also bought "crystal champagne glasses that rang like bells when a finger was run over the rim, a tiny typewriter that tapped out the English words she learned at school, and a white fur cape that brought out the rich chestnut brown in her dark skin"(Hogan 9). These easy pleasures were made possible by the wealth Grace secured from the oil extraction industry.

Such odd delights were quite widespread among the oil-rich Indians. Jim Josh, a lover of plants, is reported to have purchased “several useless claw-footed bathtubs even though he lived in a shack with no running water” (Hogan 56). Michael Horse had three gold teeth. Jim Josh bought a car even though he knew no driving. “It's just for looks”, he said (Hogan 92). Later he uses the car as a tomato hothouse. In all these instances, one could symbolically identify how the oil culture works by providing value to oil “through the material networks of the oil economy” and thereby rearranging everyday experiences “around oil-bound ways of life” (Barrett, *Oil Culture* xxvi). Here money allows them to focus on trivialities, concealing the real fiends from sight.

` Frederick Buell describes this as 'exuberance' in his work, “A Short History of Oil Cultures”. For the Osage citizens, the age of exuberance was stimulated when the energy accumulated underground was excavated to create a new form of a world structured around oil. Men indulged in buying razor blades and bow ties and “any and all of the gadgets the scalpers sold from their rickety tables and stands, no matter how much the prices had been marked up” (Hogan 57). In the meantime, the women purchased “red and pink satin ribbons, black patent leather shoes and expensive jewelled watches they pinned on their dress”(Hogan 57).

Consequently, oil culture whittles not just the material reality but it also dictated relationships and marriages. For the native Indians, these experiences came along with exploitation. Osage women with head rights to oil money were spotted as the key to material fortunes. They were sheer business investments. When a white man was asked what his livelihood or source of revenues was, it was customary to answer that he had married an Osage woman. The Native

Indian matrimony mediator received letters that were apparent business deals. One of the letters Horse kept in his records diary read so.

> I am a young man with good habits and none of the bad, with several thousand dollars, and want a good Indian girl for a wife. . .I want a woman between the ages of 18 and 35 years of age, not full blood, but prefer one as near white as possible… If you place me in correspondence with a good woman and I succeed in marrying her for every Five Thousand Dollars she is worth I will give you Twenty-Five Dollars. If she is worth 25,000 you would get $125 if I got her. This is a plain business proposition and I trust you will consider it as such. (Hogan 34)

This letter is a testimony of how the dominant whites looked down upon the native Indians with a smidgen of racism. Wedlocks with Indian women benefited the white man economically. This is why Louise is worried about fortune hunters coming in search of Nola, "the richest, Indian in the territory" and wanting to "rub elbows" with the newly orphaned rich Indian girl (Hogan 35).

Ironically, oil money attracted not just alliances but also murder. The ensuing catastrophe described as a significant aspect of oil culture is visible in the money-hungry violence of the petromodern world that had motivated Nola Blanket's marriage. She married Will Forrest at thirteen to protect herself from the murderous fortune hunters. She believed Will Forrest would protect her not because he loved her, but because she was monetarily beneficial to him if alive. Thus even intimate relationships between people became tainted and soulless. Later, Nola feels that Will was "part of the shadowy white world that was losing its focus" (Hogan 353). Thus oil determined not only luxuries but also fashioned hollow and vicious relationships, especially for those drenched in its glory.

This catastrophe was “an integral part of the exuberance of oil”, mutually reinforcing each other (Buell 282). This is manifested in the violence committed against the affluent Indian Osage population. Thus Grace Blanket, the richest of the Osage tribe, is shot and murdered. The murderers mask the killing as suicide by leaving a whiskey bottle nearby. This instance in the novel is based on the death of twenty-five-year-old Anna Brown, a rich Osage woman who died under similar circumstances. Here fiction and reality merge to point fingers at the oil-induced petro violence.

> A month before Grace's death, an Indian man was shot by his wife… Then, another man, an Indian railroad worker, was found beaten to death near the oil workers' makeshift housing settlement right after oil had been found on his land. There were no suspects… Everyday there were new violent acts reported in the newspapers… The world has gone crazy. (Hogan 39)

Petro capitalists like John Hale instigate such violence as represented in the novel. The character of John Hale is modeled on William K.Hale, the capitalist murderer of Anna Brown and her family (Wilson 145). Initially, John Hale was known to the tribal people as a person who leased land for cattle business. He “reigned over the cattle grazing land he'd leased from Indian landholders”(Hogan 54). In reality, he was one among those mesmerised by the oil industry, which assured rewards and incentives for a modest investment and less labour.

The arrival of such petro capitalist agents coincides with the rise of aggression in the terrain and they are intrinsically connected. The novel discusses how the Osage land had “witnessed those recent years of violence

when roughnecks and swindlers had arrived to seek their fortunes in Watona" (Hogan 40). These petromodern capitalist thieves with aspirations for oil money are visible in the land. Hogan describes them as "newer kinds of thieves" who "wore fine suits, diamond stickpins, and buffed their fingernails" (Hogan 40).Their ingenious astuteness helped them to build a stable rapport and gain the trust of the natives. In the text, Hale is presented as a person who "because of his service to the tribe" was called "King of the Indians" (Hogan 54). Yet, they were sly, shrewd, and in relentless pursuit of profit.

The profit-motive mentioned above is an essential feature of petro capitalism. In petro capitalism, oil is considered as a commodity that generates profit and consequently influences the price of all other consumer commodities in the world. Like agrarian capitalism, this mode of capitalism is "territorial imperative" requiring the oil entrepreneur to access the landed property (Rutledge 4). This guarantees a period of material 'exuberance' to the people who possess the oil land as the capitalists were "always ready with a quick offer and fast cash" (Hogan 54). Yet, with "exuberance" came "catastrophe", with material prosperity came "new thieves, those who bought and stole Indian lands" (Hogan 52).

As in all capitalist societies, in Watona, there exists tension between the exploiters and the exploited. The hostility is evident between the capitalist oil men and the tribal earth people, which can be witnessed in several instances. The natives considered the oil people who hunted the eagles and feared the bats to be "foreign and strange"(Hogan 114). For them, the Euro-Americans resembled "visitors from another world, a world that eats itself and uses up the earth" (Hogan 114). Correspondingly, the dominant whites "had ideas about Indians,

that they were unschooled, ignorant people who knew nothing about life and money" (Hogan 60). Those in charge of the oil corporation believed that the "Indians were a locked door to the house of progress" (Hogan 56).

In Hogan's novel, this struggle is more detectable, as the resource owners turned victims belonged to the easily exploitable tribal group. The owners of the oil companies despised giving money to the Indians even though they were lawfully entitled to receive the money. The Euro-American clerks who made the payment of the royalties commented on how they do not have the kind of money the Indians enjoyed (Hogan 61). As for the natives, the Euro-Americans were nothing more than "naholies"(Hogan 61). Thus the capitalist conflicts seem to give way to racist cultural conflicts as well.

There were some events where this hostility turned intimate and affected the familial bondings. Thus in the novel, there are instances when the Graycloud family mistrust Floyd just because he belongs to the dominant white race. He was a person who abided by the Indian ways, and when Louise Graycloud married him, he took the Indian family name. Nevertheless, Louise suspected Floyd's love when oil was discovered on their land. At the same time, these fears and misgivings cannot be considered inconsequential or trivial. The murder of Ruth Graycloud by her husband and the sheriff's murderous courtship with Lettie prove how oil money can denigrate human character. Thus, oil prosperity produces discordance between individuals in varying degrees.

Even the state seems to plot with the multimillion oil corporations. There seems to be a conspiracy between the state and the capitalists to deny the Osage Indians their legal share, which is evident in the novel. The capitalist agent in the novel John Hale engages in murder. Mardy Green, a witness at Hale's trial court,

insensitively compares the killings of the resource landowners to “clearing the land for your farm, or hunting the food you eat” (Hogan 327). Thus the natives were treated as objects who could easily be removed and displaced according to the whims and fancies of the industrialist. Meanwhile, the crimes committed against the natives were legitimized using capitalist principles of money and power. The materialist exploitation perpetrated by the petro capitalist group in association with the state is reflected by Terry P. Wilson in *The Underground Reservation: Osage Oil.*

> From the time of their removal from Kansas [in 1871] until the entry of the United States into World War II, government-local, state, and federal, failed to protect the Osages from the larcenous among their non-Indian neighbors. Although perhaps only a few persons directly participated in acts of violence, fraud, and theft, a much larger number I would say an overwhelming majority viewed the Osages as prime subjects for exploitation, if not by murder and robbery, then by sharp business practices, corrupt guardianships, and especially, a general willingness to share in dispossessing them.(xii)

This exploitation accounts for the murder of several characters in the novel. Grace Blanket and John Thomas are shot dead. Sara Blanket dies in a nitro fuse explosion. Walker is poisoned, and Benoit is found hanging from his own belt in a cell. The primary motive of all these homicides committed by the capitalist representatives was the territorial oil money. Even the state seems oblivious to these crimes, for “Indians were the shadow people, living almost invisibly on the fringes” (Hogan 81).

The laws in the state seem to be formulated to work in favour of the capitalists. Thus, when Benoit was wrongly accused and put in jail for the murder of his wife, Sara Blanket, the law prevented him from placing an inquiry or claim. The lawyer informs him that he is an Indian and cannot file a claim for his wife's money as “Indians are not citizens” (Hogan 84). This discrimination was an accepted fact among the natives. This can be understood from the words of Lenoit, who explains, “Besides, we're not legal, Benoit. The law doesn't apply to us”(Hogan 84).

This is reflected in the words of Lakota Sioux Stace Red Hawk, who worked for the U.S. Bureau of Investigation. Stace was the officer in charge of investigating the murders of the oil-rich Osage. However, as he progressed through the case, he recognizes that “he'd made an error of judgment by taking a job with the government… He knew good men worked there. But even those had a sense of duty that overruled what sometimes knew to be right” (Hogan 248). The whole legal system seems to justify the Euro-Americans even when the events reveal that it is the natives who were right. Nevertheless, the Osage Indians remained silent. “They might be cheated, but they still had life, and until only recently, even that was not guaranteed under the American laws, so they remained trapped, and wary” (Hogan 63).

The government also brought in policy changes, making life difficult for the native Indians. In the beginning, the Osage Indian Tribe is given their due share of mineral royalty money. However, soon, laws were implemented that prevented them from getting the fair share of their payments. When Moses Graycloud enquires with the officials about the full amount due to him, they quietly inform him that the Indian Commission has changed the directives.

"You're a full blood Indian… Full bloods only get part of their money" (Hogan 60). Moses finds this unreasonable and unfair. He angrily retorts, "In the spring, you told us our people with white blood only received part of their money since they are part white. And not entitled. Now you are saying that we full-bloods get only part of our money since someone we never see believes that we mismanage it?" (Hogan 61). Here, the natives are considered as children "without a nickel's worth of intelligence", and laws are created by the Euro Americans who have no respect for the Indians (Hogan 61).

The government had set up competency commissions that could easily declare any competent Indian incompetent. "The courts had already named at least twenty competent Indian people as incompetents and had already withheld all their money until they were assigned legal guardians" (Hogan 62). The American Congress passed this draconian law in 1921, preventing the Osages from having full control over their own money. As Grann rightly points out, " [t]he crooked guardians and administrators of Osage estates were typically among the most prominent white citizens: businessmen and ranchers and lawyers and politicians. So were the lawmen and prosecutors and judges who facilitated and concealed the swindling" (154).

This concept of guardianship can be metaphorically connected to the imperialist past of the native American tribe. When Nola goes to the courthouse to sign the guardianship papers, she notices a painting on the wall which depicts Indian women presenting grain and meat to white men. This representation symbolically shows the Osage women willfully giving up their resources and cultural identity to the Euro Americans. The guardianship laws were formulated with the motive of protecting the natives. However, here, as in the painting and

Nola's real-life, guardianship means nothing more than manipulation. Thus Nola is part of the historical legacy which celebrates exploitation in the guise of protection.

The case of a veteran Indian named Keto, who is declared incompetent, mirrors the historical corruption by the guardians. Keto's guardian is an attorney. He buys a new house for Keto. But Keto preferred to stay in his ancestral home. “So this lawyer moves his own things in that house, even his wife” (Hogan 74). The same manipulation can be seen in the case of Nora Blanket also. She is married to Will Forrest, her guardian's son. When Will confronts Mr. Forrest for using Nora's money without her permission, the lawyer dismisses him by reminding him, “She's your paycheck” (Hogan 191). This is a complex criminal operation and the state apparently gives its consent to this visibly invisible oil royalty crime. Hogan's detailing of these crimes closely follows the historical reality of these crimes as recorded by the historian, David Grann in his work, *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murder and the Birth of the FBI* .

> Although some white guardians and administrators tried to act in the best interests of the tribe, countless others used the system to swindle the very people they were ostensibly protecting. Many guardians would purchase, for their wards, goods from their own stores or inventories at inflated prices. (One guardian bought a car for $250 and then resold it to his ward for $1,250.) Or guardians would direct all of their wards' business to certain stores and banks in return for kickbacks. Or guardians would claim to be buying homes and land for their wards while really buying these for themselves. Or guardians would outright steal. One government

> study estimated that before 1925 guardians had pilfered at least $8 million directly from the restricted accounts of their Osage wards. (154)

Here the laws instated by the state take away the agency of the natives to question these atrocities. The federal government thus failed to protect the fundamental rights of the citizens. This system malfunction is evident in Benoit's trial of inquiry. Benoit's trial is delayed due to the lack of clarity about jurisdiction. The county court held him in jail but did not initiate trial as he was not under their authority. The tribal court wanted to release him as there was no evidence against him. The federal court, which had the power of jurisdiction, did not try him as he was an Indian. Consequently, the whole state machinery was involved in the deceitfully committed murder which was disguised as a suicide. As Stace opines, “Uncle Sam was a cold uncle with a mean soul and a cruel spirit” (Hogan 221).

Accordingly, the whole affair presented in Hogan's *Mean Spirit* is a politically assisted plunder. The pillage involved not just the Indian community but the earth as well. Here the profit-driven oil capitalism bruised the fields and created craters on the earth's surface. “The earth bled oil” (Hogan 54). In fact, there is a direct connection between the exploited Osage people and their land. This is recorded in the diary of Michael Horse. He writes, “the land is ravaged and covered with scars, and so are the broken people” (Hogan 341).

With the discovery of oil, both the people and the land are commoditised to satisfy the economic and political needs of the capitalists. This commodification is rooted in history; hence, the manipulation of the oil-saturated land's political, cultural and economic state of affairs is not a new phenomenon. Thus, the exploitation of Osage land materializes into geopolitical colonialism.

For the Euro-American capitalists , geography implies the geologist's yellowed maps of the Oklahoma Indian Territory indicating the oil sites and politics connotes money, oil, and power.

The novel bears testimony to how geopolitical colonialism is initiated through cultural colonialism. Here the politically dominant Euro Americans impose their cultural identity over the natives. This should be considered an attempt to erase the marginalized culture. Thus, “All the Hill children under sixteen have to go to boarding school down in Custer, Oklahoma…if the families resisted, the children would be made wards of the state and removed permanently from their homes” (Hogan 35). The children at school are awarded torturous punishment. Calvin Severence loses the use of his thumbs when he was “hung by his thumbs as punishment for “insolence’” (Hogan 151). In fact the motto of the founding father of Calvin's school is “Kill the Indian, and save the man” (Hogan 177). The motto points to how the Euro Americans treated the Indians with contempt. The whites consider themselves the dominant signifiers of cultural modernity and progress, thereby carrying the burden of educating the Indians who lack wisdom.

These attempts to appropriate the identity of the Native Americans were indeed successful to a significant extent. Petrocapitalists like John Hale had exploited the inferiority complexes built on native representations to hire men “to help him cut, burn and clear their own land” (Hogan 54). Thus the people who believed in the oneness of all life were ideologically coaxed to trust in materialism and covetousness. Once, the Osage people had faith in land and life, “Life resides in all things, even the motionless stones… Live Gently with the land. We are one with the land” (Hogan 361). However, as time elapsed, they

were left with little choice “but to become meat-eaters with sharp teeth, devouring their own land and themselves in the process” (Hogan 54).

For land to be geopolitically colonized, the landholders should be marginalised, thus making them easily disposable. The chapter had earlier discussed the marginalisation faced by natives from fellow citizens who represent the dominant Euro-American community and also from the state, which is obliged to protect its citizens. These social, economic, ecological, and racial conflicts get more relentless as new competitors emerge in the oil territory.

New contenders in the territory create anxiety in the established oil firms. This is mentioned by John Hale when he complains about new companies shooting up like Johnson grass. “We've got to put them out of business or we won't make a go of it ourselves. They're tapping into our pools and draining them” (Hogan 190). Here the capitalist agent, Hale, is pressurized by the exhausting oil resource and the emerging rivals. This should be read in relation to Mr. Forrest's words who, in conversation with his son Will informs the readers that he had lost his own money in Hale's company. Thus Hale is compelled to put excessive demand on land and people leading to a resource war.

This becomes more evident when he lays hands on the lands of Belle Graycloud. Moses and Belle were people who had resisted the infiltration of petromodern principles and modern capitalist materialism into their lives. But with the necessity of more oil territory, Belle's land was shrewdly leased to John Hale by the Indian agent for grazing cattle. According to the agent, “It's best not to leave the land lying idle” (Hogan 213). For a society led by the capitalist principle, any land or person not immersed in money minting is considered useless and indolent. Thus Belle who believed the earth to be her marketplace

and grew corn and bees, was judged lazy, and her land was forcefully leased to the capitalist agent.

John Hale was obviously in search of the black wealth deducted by the geologists. Infact Belle was in dire need of oil royalties. The Grayclouds could buy back the cattle and the horses they sold and stop thinking about selling the Buick if they willingly allowed drilling on their land. Nevertheless, Belle, who realized the tragedies that follow prosperity, was untouched by the sight of "earth's black blood" (Hogan 229). Even Rena Graycloud who "smiled with excitement and pleasure"at the sight of oil "wracked with sobs" when she thought about the tragedy the treasure could bring (Hogan 229). Floyd and Moses tried to cover the oil with water, hoping nobody else would see the oil carried downstream. Yet the efforts of the family were of no effect. Through their unethical practices, the state and the petro capitalists hijack the rights of the natives whose life and culture counted too little. Accordingly, the state built its economies on such sacrificial zones and disposable people.

Naomi Klien in her book, *This Changes Everything* describes how extractivism is directly linked to the sacrificial zones. According to her fossil fuel resource plunder happens in places that "somehow don't count and therefore can be poisoned, drained, or otherwise destroyed, for the supposed greater good of economic progress" (156). The whole of the Osage Territory is reigned by this toxic idea. Here the centre is fed through the sacrifices of the disposable margins whose culture is visibly colonised through the principles of racial superiority. Thus the Graycloud family loses its rights on the land as the state considers them deserving of sacrifice.

Akin to all sacrifice zones that nourished industrial capitalism, the Osage territory was also an “out-of the way” place (Klein 275). They were economically prosperous, but they did lack state support. Even the sheriff, Jess Gold, who was in charge of guarding the citizens, believed that “Indians aren't like us… They drive good cars. But under it all, they're still different. Half savage maybe” (Hogan 125). In another instance, a Hill Indian woman alluding to Michael Horse's fate opines, “So he wrote a letter to the United States? And now he's in danger. That is why we don't talk to the government” (Hogan 272). The same sentiment is reflected by Moses Graycloud when he suggests that “The law is on their side because it's their law” (Hogan 113).

The state and the law machinery seem to view the people as jettisons. This is apparent to the readers since the oil murders in the Osage territory go almost unnoticed. This is inspite of the several letters sent to Washington by Michael Horse, Moses Graycloud, John Thomas, Walker, and Mr. Black. The oil murders received attention only after the death of Mr. Forrest. “He was the case breaker. He was white, educated, affluent, and his body was found on Indian land, which gave them federal jurisdiction” (Hogan 310-311). The EuroAmerican racial identity of Mr. Forrest coaxed the law to investigate the oil deaths. As for the country, the violence and trial that followed were just sensational spectacles. Thus Stace describes how journalists from far-off places showed up only to write the lurid story of the murdered Indians and their oil money. In his *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon discusses how spectacular violence is venerated by the media. However, news houses in the country seem to be indifferent to the anonymous violence in the Osage nation. The murders received attention only after twenty homicides were

committed. This manifested the inherent process of 'othering' even in the face of tragedy.

At the trial, the witness, Mardy Green claimed that Hale was not guilty of the murder even when he confessed that “the idea was Hale's” (Hogan 327). He tries to argue that Hale had no ulterior motives. Hale had taken an insurance policy on Walker for the money the Indian owed. Walker would have killed himself and made the insurance void. Therefore the witness asserted that Hale had the right to murder Walker. According to Green, “you could call that a plot… or call it murder, but here it's just survival” (Hogan 327). Thus, even the most heinous petro violence is projected as a strategy for capitalist and economic survival.

All the arguments at the court reflect the historical reality of the period. This prevalent outlook is recorded by Louis F. Burns in *A History of the Osage People*, “the attitude that honest people could honourably cheat the Osages prevailed throughout the county. This permeated the business and professional community as well as the government and law enforcement” (456). This is the very reason why Hale attended the trial looking self-righteous, “you'd think God himself has commanded him to act” (Hogan 329).

Ultimately, Hale won the case at the town court, establishing the capitalists' power and rendering the Indians voiceless. As Michael Horse writes in his diary, “The land is ravaged and covered with scars and so are the broken people. Those of us who still have an ounce of strength have been losing it during these testimonies in the courthouse” (Hogan 341). Later the Osage tribe had to pay the federal agents to conduct a fair investigation of the oil murders. This again is documented by the Native American historian, Louis Burns, who

describes the tribe to have “contributed $20,000 to defray the costs exclusive of attorney fees” (442).

Thus, the Osage tribe endured much violence, both immediate and delayed, across time and space. The oil murders give testimony to the immediate violence they had to suffer. But the “slow violence”" which emerged slowly was of unprecedented magnitude and culminated in the exodus of the Osage tribe. Horse writes, “They left like a lost and hungry trail of ants” (Hogan 342). The exodus of the tribe was based on false information given by federal employees who informed them that the army was going to move them. So the Indians sold their land and migrated once again from their homes. “I saw them leaving, the men in their cotton summer shirts and straw hats, the woman with clean brushed hair. . .I saw the grandmothers sitting on the wagons, the breezes stirring their hair as they watched the land pass by, their soft, moist eyes looking over the fields that moved back and away from them” (342).

This act of selling the land obviously rewarded those petro capitalists who pounced on the money-loaded oil lands. The state once again schemed to dispose off the disposable people. At an earlier point in history, “soldiers had forced the line of people west, out from their Mississippi homeland. They were beaten and lost, forced to give up everything that had been their lives” (Hogan 210). Yet they remain undefeated. They picked up the shattered tribe and sheltered their wounded race. But the newfound land also deceived them by blessing them with the treacherous liquid that could destroy their tribe, making them more vulnerable. The oil money was a curse for the Osage community and led to what MacDonald terms “petro-dispossession”, which created a kind of alienation in the oil people (10).

> They found no happiness in possessing money; they enjoyed the passing pleasure of buying new "things." However, the "things" brought no lasting happiness because they had no meaning. Thus, Osage life had lost its purpose, and their souls suffered for direction. It was a case of being set adrift in a strange world. There was nothing familiar to clutch and stay afloat in the world of white man's wealth (Burns 459).

Instead, the petroviolence in the region lead to post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) in the natives, akin to the case of Nola Blanket. As Munasir Kamal observes, "Nola, as a witness to her mother's murder and an inhabitant of an environment where danger is constant, has symptoms that are not fully commensurate with the symptom-clusters of PTSD: re-experiencing, avoidance/numbing, and arousal"(95). Thus Nora is observed as sleeping "with her eyes wide open, not letting her guard down" (Hogan 44). Even though her mother's death initiated traits of traumatic depression in her, the removal of Nola from her natural environment aggravated this. She rejects the uniform provided by the school and dresses herself in "Osage skirt with ribbons and a pair of moccasins" (Hogan 128). She returned to the classroom wearing a slip when ordered to change the skirt. Her marriage and pregnancy intensify the trauma, leading to her murdering her husband, Will Forrest. However, her leaving Watona and her return to the ancestral ecology of the hills seem to cure her and bring her back to normalcy. Thus, the psychological turmoils she suffered were not just the effect of trauma but were also initiated by the change in her homeland, resulting in solastalgia.

The drilling and the "stationary displacement" had a metaphysical influence on the native's unconscious life. Oil capitalism had colonized their

dreams. “Bad dreams were as common as gas fires at the drill sites, as ordinary as black Buicks” (Hogan 39). When Michael Horse listens to these dreams, he associates the dreadful dreams to earth, which was “drilled and dynamited open” (Hogan 39). According to Horse, the turbulence on earth affected the life and sleep of the natives. However, the appaling nightmares that recur are in reality, a part of the psycho-terratic trauma they suffer. As Hogan herself remarks in her poem “Oil”, “We're full of bread and gas,/getting fat on the outside/while inside we grow thin”(58). Thus while the exuberance fills their materialistic lives, their hearts are emaciated.

In Hogan’s *Mean Spirit*, the women bear the burden of oil prosperity in a manifold way. Firstly, being the marginalised gender, the women with oil headright are exploited by the patriarchal institution of marriage. Nola Blanket and Ruth Graycloud are victims of these masculine matrimonial agendas. They prove to be easy prey for the oil capitalists who perpetrate violence against them. Another noticeable gender discrimination in the novel is the lack of female drivers. While automobility had bestowed freedom to the Osage tribe, the women did not enjoy this autonomy. Even Grace Blanket, who stands for female liberty and strong will, seems to lack automobile independence. Thus even when oil exuberance embraces the tribe in particular manners, the women are alienated from the exuberance. As Maria Mies and Vandhana Shiva opines in *Ecofeminism,*

> [C]apitalist patriarchy or 'modern' civilization is based on a cosmology and anthropology that structurally dichotomizes reality, and hierarchically opposes the twoparts to each other: the one always

> considered superior, always thriving, and progressing at the expense of the other. Thus, nature is subordinated to man; woman to man (5).

Accordingly, the women in the oil territory are represented as close kins of nature who find meaning in living in intimate communion with nature. Thus, Belle Graycloud is represented as a woman who sang when planting corn and conversed to her chickens 'in the same affectionate tone as she used when speaking to her girls and corn" (Hogan 211). Her turbulent attack on the eagle hunters and her struggle to protect the bats in the Sorrow cave presents her as a woman taking care of the drilled and weary earth. Hogan describes how Belle "looked like a mountain" in her struggle to guard "the beautiful creatures hated by those who lived in what they called the light" (279).

The earth is a “strong feminine presence” in Hogan’s novel (Carew-Miller 38). The description of drilling reflects a rape narrative wherein the machineries for boring penetrate the red soil of Oklahoma using violence on the earth. However, the novelist abstains from depicting the earth as a passive victim, instead, she is described as a revengeful being whose wrath “had swallowed five workmen and ten mules” (Hogan 52).

For a petrocapitalist society motivated by profit, this violence of the land on the oil workers is a regular occurrence. Apart from the abrupt mention of the oil workers in the novel, Hogan failed to ascribe an individual identity to anyone of them. Infact they are mere pawns in the grand petrocapitalist strategies. As Carew-Miller suggests, “Hogan depicts the workers as both victim and criminal, pitted against a power they don't understand by the man whose pockets they fill” (39). The petromodern “monstrous” machinery worked on capitalist oil terrains “where pumps fueled by diesel, worked day and night” (Hogan 52). In the

meantime, as Hogan herself muses in the poem titled “Oil”, “ the bosses stretch out,white ridge of backbone in the sun” (58).

The above analysis of the oil territory in Oklahoma brings in the concept of the Third World, put forward by Deleuze and Guattari. According to them, the capitalist states which occupy the centre position have external third worlds and internal third worlds. These “internal Third Worlds … rise up within them and work them from the inside”. They are the “peripheral zones of underdevelopment inside the center” where the marginalised disposable people reside (469). In Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit*, the Osage nation occupies the periphery. They feed the centre, the capitalist American oil nation, with fossil fuel energy even when they are crushed and burned.

The second book chosen by the researcher for analysis is Jennifer Haigh's *Heat and Light,* set a century apart from the Osage oil murders. If *Mean Spirit* embodies the initial exuberance and catastrophe of oil discovery, *Heat and Light* is spaced in modern twenty-first century America where men survive “living within oil, breathing it and registering it with our senses” (LeMenager 6). Reading the two works of fiction adjacently gives the readers an awareness of the diverse energy eras dealt with in the fiction. While *Mean Spirit* is set in the 1920s, Haigh's novel is set in 2010, in the tough oil world.

Frederick Buell distinguished between how the oil culture had assessed the resource ambivalence during the early twentieth century and the late twentieth century. The early twentieth-century oil appraisal linked the resource to progress and social advancement, while the later twentieth-century evaluation, especially after the 1960s, viewed oil as a threat to society and ecology. This divergence in approach could be observed in the novels analysed. While *Mean*

Spirit, set in the 1920s, gave much importance to "catastrophe", this catastrophe was often justified by historians who considered the Reign of Terror as a war between races in contrast to oil violence. They simplified the capitalist agenda and acquitted oil from all charges. At the same time, Jennifer Haigh's *Heat and Light* actively engage with petro modernity in multi-perspective petro discourses through carefully designed characters who address issues like health, ecology, and economics.

Both novels are set in Pennsylvania. Yet *Heat and Light* deals with a different city, Bakerton. Bakerton is a township named after the mining company Baker Brothers and it played a crucial role in early American energy history. The coal regime had flourished in this terrain and the reader can perceive "the ghost of prosperity that lingers in the town" (Haigh 11–12). Yet the regime had left unhealed wounds that "scarred and narrowed like the arteries of the very old" (Haigh 11).

Presently. Bakerton is positioned diametrically on top of Marcellus Shell, a colossal natural gas deposit. Situated underground, Marcellus Shell stretched from the south of New York through Pennsylvania and parts of West Virginia and Ohio. This particular geological zone is known to hold a plethora of natural gas. However, standard drilling methods cannot extract the gas entrapped in the rock. Therefore the whole deposit was considered useless. As Bobby Frame, the capitalist representative, describes, the Marcellus shell is "[n]ature's safe-deposit box, its treasures locked away like insurance for the future" (Haigh 10).

Later, American ingenuity did find a way to open the Marcellus vault. "An environmentally-minded oilman, George Mitchell, pioneered a way of cracking open rocks with water and chemicals that would come to embody one

of the greatest environmental fears of the twenty-first century" (Gold 17). The extractive modus operandi comprises a procedure called hydraulic fracturing that breaks the rocks and frees the gas trapped in the earth. This discovery changed the status of the terrain and altered the global dynamics of natural gas production and consumption. According to Amy Rubin, the geologist in the novel, "The Marcellus Shale held more gas than anyone had imagined: by her calculations, a mind blowing fifty trillion cubic feet" (Haigh 35).

For the inhabitants of Baker Town, this discovery had brought the burden of choosing between economic prosperity and sacrificed landscape. Bobby Frame, the oil representative of Dark Elephant Energy, had arrived at the town with an enticing offer that allowed the residents to keep their farming land yet enjoy the lease money if they allowed the oil company to drill under their property. The land renting process was made to appear straightforward and effortless, "There's nothing to do… Sign the papers and wait for the check" (Haigh 11).

Here, Bobby Frame presents this invitation to the people who have already tasted the uncertainty of energy currency. As mentioned before, Bakerton is a city built on coal energy and most of the people to whom the invitation is offered played in the coal strippings, coming "home black with coal dirt" (Haigh 198). Therefore, landowners found it acceptable to have their children play next to gas wells. They considered this as an indispensable sacrifice that would allow them to pursue their dreams of prosperity.

Consequently, people like Rich Devlin, astounded by the good fortune, signed the indenture immediately with great enthusiasm. "Arvis Kipler signed immediately; his three hundred acres are the linchpin. Farther to the south,

Fetterson and Norton signed the very same morning, a sunny Monday" (Haigh 19-20). For Devlin, this petro modern prosperity was not just alluring but essential as well. The quest for oil money pervaded even his dreams. "Once again, he dreams of digging. His dream self digs a hole and fills it with cash, bundles of fifties and hundreds going right into the ground" (Haigh 57). He believed the money would arrive soon. So he deludes about leaving his menial job as a jail warden to develop his forty-acre farm and refinance his mortgage. Thus through Rich Delvin, the novelist presents petro modernity's assurance to bring succour to life's toil and desperation, a reverie of exuberance before the reader.

His conviction in his reverie can be discerned in the fallacious argument he makes to Darren. This argument exposes his yearning for prosperity and reveals his vulnerability to capitalist schemas. Darren, who has his own doubts about fracking, informs his brother that fracking fluid might be toxic as there are around two hundred chemicals. Rich tries to defend this with an erroneous line of reasoning.

> Rich guffaws. "Don't talk to me about chemicals. It is a meaningless term. Everything is made of chemicals. If you eat an apple, If it's on the periodic table, it's a chemical."
>
> "Oxygen, for example."
>
> "Oxygen is a chemical"
>
> … "Look, nothing's perfect. The point is, it's an opportunity. I'm not sitting around waiting for the mines to come back. Unlike some people"
>
> "Seriously?" says Darren. "That's the dream?" (Haigh 200)

This exchange shows how deluded their fantasies were. Soon, their wishful daydreams turned into a nightmare. The oil rigs and the new oil-powered machinery destroy the tranquility of their dreams as well as their homes. Thus the immense trucks carrying the drill rigs intrude into Rich Devlin's Sunday afternoon lunch “at the speed of a cruise ship, enveloped in a cloud of diesel fumes” (Haigh 195). According to Graeme Macdonald, these “monstrous technologies and diabolical machines” embody the petromodern world (21). Consequently, the Devlin family has no choice but to watch in silence “the hulking machine inch up the ridge… It's as though an aircraft carrier has run around in Rich's background” (Haigh 195-196).

These oil-driven machines can alter work patterns and everyday schedules. This accounts for the day and night drilling on the site on all days of the week. “Shifts start at noon, at midnight, at 4.00 pm, at dawn. The cafeteria, which never closes, serves bacon and eggs at all hours. It's always breakfast time for someone” (Haigh 96). Thus the landowners who lived in close proximity to the drill site were destined to endure the reverberations of the gas rig “lit day and night with klieg lights” and the mechanised roar of the machineries reminiscent of “a tropical storm” (215). In the novel, Haigh compares the oil rig's mechanised roar to a natural phenomenon. This is a petro modern industrial world feature where “machines are presented as the new cosmogony” (MacDonald 20). Thus, with their unparalleled power, the machines quicken the expansion of petro capitalism.

In reality, the catastrophe does not end with the fury of the hideous machines. However, the residents are utterly undaunted by its effect for a long time because of their ignorance, which provides them with a sense of false

optimism. In a conversation with Darren Delvin, Rich Delvin informs him that his wife, Shelby was all for the money until she saw a drill rig in the neighbour's land. Rich sarcastically remarks on how “she thought they were just going to conjure [oil] out of the ground” (Haigh 202).

This invisibility of oil, a feature of petro modernity, is discussed by several petro critics. Georgiana Banita says, “Oil flows invisibly, weaving its mythical, snakelike weight through the earth” (186). As a capitalist product, an average consumer is uninformed and ignorant about its process of extraction, processing, refining or transportation. “Oil itself is channeled in invisible underground pipelines and throughout the machinery and vehicles it fuels. Most people never see or smell oil and all its chemical distillates” (Salvaggio 427). Thus until Shelby Devlin is forced to sense and inhale oil and taste it in her underground water, she seems to be ignorant of the distaste of oil.

Petro capitalism fosters this invisibility but celebrates the oil economies through spectacles of progress and prosperity while making its annoyance magically indiscernible. For this “oil requires creative accounts of its worth that depart from its physical form” (Barrett 26). In petro capitalism, fossil fuel is detached from its concrete, natural form and is considered only for its pecuniary value. Accordingly, Bobby Frame coaches his trainee by instructing him not to enter into the aspects of the natural gas deposit or the drilling process while detailing. Frame informs him, “These people care about two things; what's in it for them and how soon” (Haigh 13). This shows how the fossil fuel industry blooms and booms on opacity. Even the oil representative Bobby Frame disappears from the frame when he gets the oil leases signed.

Consequently, through disinformation techniques, the petro capitalists mislead the inhabitants of the terrain to sign exploitative gas leases. As Devlin's lawyer, Paul Zacharias informs, “It's in their interest to keep the landowner in the dark” (Haigh 361). In another instance, Lorne Trexler explains how signing a lease could make anything and everything perfectly legal. “If you signed a lease and didn't read the fine print, the company might have the right to build roads and pipelines on your property…or inject wastewater into your well. They don't even have to tell you they're doing it” (Haigh 225). For indigent laymen like Devlin who are ignorant of the legal jargon, the lease contract “might as well have been written in a foreign language” (Haigh 361). The only thing he had paid attention to in the lease agreement was the numbers that could salvage him from his hardships.

The profit-driven capitalist market with several competitors considers this manipulation justifiable. Bobby Frame and The Dark Elephant Energy have to compete with several rival companies like Logistix, Diamond Energy, and Creek to claim the natural gas terrain. Bobby Frame had been successful in the earlier three shale regions: Barnett, Haynesville, and Fayetteville. He believes that he has an advantage over Marcellus because he has been “signing more leases for less money than anyone in company history” (Haigh 18). This profit-focused exploitation can be detected in Devlin's case, wherein the agreement was signed for a mere twenty-five dollars per acre, along with 12.5 percent of the profits, “the minimum allowed by law” (Haigh 57). Thus the landowners are persuaded by hook or crook to join the grand map of petro capitalism.

Petro capitalism stanched on territorial authority and had always indulged in swindling the landowners. Unlike industrial capitalism, the land was a crucial

component of petro capitalism, and the failure to procure it affected the oil cooperation turnover. This is the reason why Bobby Frame revisits Cob Krug, “an angry crank”, to coax him to sign the lease even after “[t]he old cuss ran him off with a shotgun, twelve-gauge” (Haigh 20). The indispensability and desirability of the land are later reflected when Cob dies of a heart attack and his funeral is attended by “men in suits” whose motive was to procure the land. These industrial representatives aimed to cajole his wife, who suddenly appeared back in town after years of absence (Haigh 122). “Several asked to meet with her privately, but Bobby Frame—that morning at the Days Inn, where Lynette was also staying—had beat them to it” (Haigh 122). The perseverance and astuteness of the oil representative are evident in these gestures.

This was not the only technique by which the Dark Energy Cooperation secured land. The aptitude of Bobby Frame, the scheming agent of the company, to exploit the optimism of the landowners who gave heed to his opinions and turned them against their own neighbours is evident in the case of the Friend-Lea Acres run by the lesbian couple, Mack and Rena. Thus, with his calculative craftiness, Frame informs Rich Devlin that the Freeway project will be cost-effective only if Devlin's property is bundled with Mr.Neugebauer's land and the dairy farm, Friend- Lea Acres owned by Mack and Rena. “The Mackey farm connects Kipler to Devlin/ Neugebauer” (Haigh 20). All of them should be drilled from the same well pad. This has become impossible as the Mackeys reject the offer. This upsets Devlin. “The injustice stuns him: his entire future- his kid's future- whipped out by a neighbours whim” (Haigh 75). Frame informs him that all the neighbours of Friend- Lea Acres face the same financial peril. “I'd be aggravated too …Go have a talk with the Mackeys” (Haigh 75). The

slyness of the corporate is exhibited in these lines where he is inciting conflict between the neighbours to meet his objective.

In effect, the financial assurances by the petrocapitalists instigate other landowners to threaten the lesbian couple. In the beginning, there were warnings like " a flaming shitbag left on their doorstep" (Haigh 78). Soon this was followed by intimidation, coaxing them to sign the gas lease. This was followed by a slashed van tyre and a fire on the doorstep. All of these events can be considered as camouflaged bullying or petro-violence by the oil capitalists themselves. The capitalists make the landowners feel threatened if they do not succumb to the imperialist scheming. This results in hostility. These kinds of antagonism are widespread in oil states, where "pro-gas public relations campaigns often manipulate public opinion by associating fracking with patriotism and regional pride" thereby making the people like Mackeys uncomfortable and blameworthy (Henry 415). Threats, coercion, late-night pounding on the door, and obscene phone calls tormented them. The whole neighbourhood contrived to make their life strenuous.

They were troubled in various means

Such as withholding child support.

Shooting into their pasture.

Pounding at their door shouting filth no child should hear.

Such as following Rena from work.

Setting the toolshed on fire

The suspicious death of Mack's dog. (Haigh 207)

Even the complaint at the police station about the threats and violence is taken lightly by Chief Carcinella. He even subtly suggests that the Mackeys are

blockades to the prosperity of their neighbours. When Rena insists on registering the crime, the chief yields to the requirement. However, he asserts, “But from where I sit, this looks like a couple of unrelated acts of vandalism. Nothing much I can do about that” (Haigh 80). Thus the whole community schemes with the oil capitalists here. Oil optimism had made them one with the capitalists for whom economic prosperity is the end motive. Their sanguinity is echoed in the words of Rich Delvin, “This town is dying. It's the first glimmer of hope we've had in thirty years” (Haigh 249).

The grand oil narrative propagated by the industrial capitalists made a life unimaginable without oil. According to this discourse, fossil fuel energy creates progress and development and is the only corridor to prosperity. Thus Amy Rubin, the Associate Professor of Geology and consultant geologist for Dark Elephant Energy in her discussion with Lorne Trexler asserts, “virtually every dollar that's ever come into Pennsylvania is an energy dollar” (Haigh 375). According to her, nothing can substitute this energy lubricant. Consequently, she enquires, “So what's the alternative? Keep on burning coal?”(Haigh 375). The same sentiments are echoed in the words of a simpleton like Rich Delvin too. In his argument with his brother, Rich affirms, “The point is, what's the alternative? Send more kids to the Gulf, like I got sent? … Yes fine, renewable. Let's build a few windmills and sit around in the dark” (Haigh 202).

The reference made by Rich Devlin about the Gulf war, which is supposedly an oil-war point to the geopolitical significance of crude oil and the acute level to which capitalist countries engage themselves to procure this liquid gold. As Michael Klare avows, “petroleum stands out from other materials—water, minerals, timber, and so on—because of its pivotal role in the global

economy and its capacity to ignite large- scale combat"(27). Infact, Devlin's life from childhood to adulthood seems to revolve around carbon-based- energy. In childhood, he lived in the coal town and played in the coal pits; in youth, he travelled to the Middle East, which is described by David Harvey as the "global oil spigot"; in adulthood oil in the form of natural gas came in search of him with pledges of wealth and success (Haigh 23). Thus the protagonist of the novel is chiselled into a petromodern citizen by the ubiquitous carbon energy system.

In fact, "petromodernity had enveloped the Euro-American imagination to the extent that "oil" has become synonymous with the world. . .the world we know" (LeMenager 68). Thus, an obsession with oil eventually motivates the energy industry to engage in ultradeep drilling like fracking. "Going ultradeep implied an unprecedented potential for destruction… Ultradeep implies a disregard for climate security … Ultradeep also implies an unprecedented devotion, even love" (LeMenager 4). Accordingly, this fixation on oil has fashioned a return of the extractive industry in the North American terrains.

The state, its legislative, and the state-sponsored scientific team blinded by the grand oil narrative tend to endorse the ideologies of the oil capitalists and thereby take part in the exploitation of land and people. The Energy Act of 2005, signed by George W. Bush on August 8, 2005, in New Mexico, bears testimony to the illegitimate relationship between the state and the oil industry. According to the act, oil and gas production industries are excused from numerous environmental protection statutes. Thus the fracking industry is omitted from the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act.

Thus fracking is authorized even if it “contaminated the water supply, or caused earthquakes or possibly cancer” (Haigh 179).

The immunity provided by the laws allows the fracking industry to use any number of chemicals except diesel in hydraulic fracturing. As Lorne Trexler explained to the people gathered at the Bakerton Public Library, “fracking fluid isn't just water. It's mixed with sand and whatever chemical cocktail they think is going to work. Which chemicals exactly, we have no idea because the gas companies won't tell us” (Haigh 223). Even when Rena attempts to determine the chemicals her pregnant colleague, Steph Mulraney, was exposed to while treating a miner who was exposed to radiation. Mulraney in turn, suffered from spiking fever and sudden contractions. However, when Rena attempts to bring attention to this event, the incident is essentially discarded as unimportant and Rena is asked to “go to hell” (Haigh 205). The oil companies claim that revealing the chemicals will “destroy their competitive advantage” (Haigh 223). As McBroom opines, “the absence of any federal requirement to disclosure hazardous chemicals used in fracturing is a major issue” (4). Here the inhabitants in the resource terrain are considered devoid of subjectivity, therefore unanswerable. Thus the industry grows on state-supported disinformation tactics. As the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act is suspended in the fracking area, those affected, like Mulraney, does not obtain compensation.

The exclusion of the fracking industry from the Clean Water Act allows the industry to use water without heeding to pollution control regulations. Thus Trexler explains how “uncountable gallons of wastewater is hauled- in immense tanker trucks marked PRODUCED WATER - to ordinary sewage plants” (Haigh

223). In sewage plants, the water is treated with decontaminators that react with the wastewater's bromides, creating carcinogens like tri-halomethames. “And they're in your rivers and streams” (Haigh 224). This is obviously due to the state-determined legal system, which, along with the capitalist economic order, considers nature “as an 'exploitable,' dead object of consumption” (Dussel 19). Their only goal is resource excavation and, thereby, profit creation.

The most crucial state-assisted slow violence visible in American legal history is the Safe Drinking Water Act amendment, commonly known as the Halliburton loophole. This amendment indirectly permits the fracking industry to get away with water contamination. The landowners, who could not comprehend the illegitimate relationship existing amidst the scientific community, the state, and the oil industry, trusted the water to be safe. Yet, later the contamination becomes discernible. Thus, Rich Devlin, who earlier affirmed that “There's nothing wrong with my water” later identifies the odour, the cloudiness and the rainbow film 'like a spill of gasoline” in this water (Haigh 249). Shelby Devlin suspects water to be the source of their daughter, Olivia’s illness. This impels them to test their water. The test result positively affirms the presence of natural gas in the water.

However, the report is problematic. Even when the report claims the background conditions to be the reason for the presence of methane in water, it negates the association between water contamination and hydraulic fracturing. The report reads, “At this time, our investigation does not indicate that gas well drilling has affected your water supply. The cause of the gas migration is currently unknown and remains under investigation by DEP” (Haigh 325). Yet Devlin approaches Quentin Tanner, Director of Communications at Dark

Elephant Energy, who insists upon testing the water in their own laboratory. The results are similar, but the company claim that "the water was dirty to begin with" (Haigh 360). This is a negotiation tactic that Dark Elephant Energy used in several cases. The landowners rarely test their water before signing the lease and as a result, they lack any baseline number to which they can make past references. As Paul Zacharias opines,

> The truth is, these well contaminations are not as rare as the industry would have us believe. A well bore is lined with cement casing. If something goes wrong in the cementing phase, gas can migrate into the groundwater. Darco will contest that point. The industry has taken the absurd position that there have been no documented cases of gas migration. But it simply isn't true. (Haigh 361)

In such conflicts between the industrial capitalists and the landowners, the state seems to defend the perpetrator. Thus the health issue created by the seepage of oil-contaminated waste in the land and underground water source of the Devlin family gets no attention as it is considered unproven in medical literature, though "[t]here's a known connection between asthma and methane migration" (Haigh 226).

The study conducted by US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) titled "Evaluation of Impacts to Underground Sources of Drinking Water by Hydraulic Fracturing of Coal bed Methane Reservoirs" ascertains this unholy relationship. According to the report, "the injection of hydraulic fracturing fluids into CBM wells poses little or no threat to Underground Sources of Drinking Water "(1). The investigation even closes by suggesting that further study is not warranted on the subject. Here the federal agency, pressurized by the industry

and state, evades its responsibility to protect the citizens and ensure safe drinking water. The report gets more problematic when one of the study's three authors, Jeffrey Jollie, a hydrogeologist, reveals that the colossal oil industry manipulated and manoeuvred the research. This state-sponsored brutality and manipulation are reflected in the words of Rich Devlin, "the department of Environmental Protection failed to protect his environment…When you needed help desperately, government abandoned you" (Haigh 423).

Similarly, Haigh depicts the oil industry's veiled interest in science where Kip Oliphant finances Amy Rubin, Associate Professor of Geology, to convey his project's economic and scientific righteousness at the Marcellus Shale. Thus even when he identifies her to be the most expensive investment, he ultimately realizes that "[h]er monthly retainer is an investment in the future. Only a fool cuts corners on the science, a lesson he learned long ago" (Haigh 409). This unholy relation between science and capitalism is reflected in the letter published by Time Magazine.

> "The Big Frack" raises compelling questions about the proper relationship of the academy to industry. Dr. Amy Rubin, the geologist, quoted in the piece, is a paid consultant to Darco Energy, a gas and oil conglomerate that has— coincidentally?—endowed a new geology facility at the SUNY campus where Dr. Rubin was recently granted tenure. Such fiduciary relationships have calamitous effects on the integrity of scientific inquiry. Dr. Rubin's corporate underwriters have a direct financial stake in the outcome of her research. When a scientist accepts money from the industry, it is reasonable to ask what the industry expects in return. (Haigh 271)

This testifies to how science, state, and capitalism are all drenched in oil money and are operated via the exact string of energy politics. The constant perplexity pertaining to water contamination allows oil capitalism to thrive by suspending the citizens in a state of doubt. In his work *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor,* Rob Nixon mentions an event that happened during the presidency of George W. Bush. A memo was leaked from a political consultant, Frank Luntz, which carries the note, "Doubt is our product since it is the best means of competing with the 'body of fact' that exists in the mind of the general public"(qtd in Nixon 57). The Dark Elephant Energy in Bakerton uses the same method. The capitalists can carry their "doubt-politics" through the "lavishly funded army" of scientists "whose job it is to maintain populist levels of uncertainty sufficient to guarantee inaction" (Nixon 57). This could be undoubtedly described as slow violence where the exploited are thrown into a state of ambivalence while the capitalists prolong their manipulation.

The industry is also wise enough to "greenwash" their sins "through high-minded advertisement campaigns" (Nixon 34). Thus the roadside billboards display "a pastoral scene, a grassy meadow. Emblazoned across it is a boldfaced slogan: CLEAN ENERGY FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE. At the centre of the meadow stands an unobtrusive metal canister, man-size, painted dark green" (Haigh 179).

Capitalists like Clifford Oliphant are driven by what Haigh describes as "monomania": "He views the world as a static tableau with, at any given moment, a single moving part, an isolated point of dynamism" (Haigh 27). As a result, they pay full attention to one point, and their movement is like following a bouncing ball. Here the ball is the financial aspirations they aim to achieve. This

is why he cannot comprehend the 'ingratitude' of the community that initiated e-mail campaigns against the company. According to him, the people in Bakerton "made their fortunes off his nerve and hard work, his unerring instinct, his willingness to imperil himself. For two years, nearly three, they had bathed in money" (Haigh 382). Here Clifford Oliphant commonly known by the name, Kip is unable to fathom the injustice he had committed against the community. The capitalists thus attempt to prove their righteousness, while the community per se is persuaded to subsist in proximity with trauma and desire, injury and pleasure (LeMenager 17).

Consequently, the laypeople of Bakerton are caught between reverie and reality, prosperity and sacrifice. These people who still carry the memoirs of the prosperous coal age tend to fall for the capitalist dictum "No Prosperity without Sacrifice" with no understanding of what they ought to sacrifice. Only later do they realize the profundity of the sacrifice requitted from them. Herc, the rig manager, reveals this ambivalence. According to him, "The one's who've got leased are in a hurry to get their money. But once we tear up their property, they want us to get lost, too" (Haigh 128). This change in attitude happens to the landowners only after they experience the repercussions of fracking. This may include reasons like crowding lines in the petrol pumps, shortage of parking space, increasing rent in the township, and the clamour of pieces of machinery to the reverberation of the earth during seismic testing. The community comprehends that "the town is being changed permanently" (Haigh 129). Here fossil fuel energy turns into an evil power "that alienates people from the very elements that have sustained them, environmentally and culturally" (Nixon 69).

The manoeuvring by the capitalist system often targets the poor population. When Bobby Frame approaches the Devlin family, he is confident that he can make the family sign the lease because of the "peculiar poverty of couples with young children" in the house (Haigh16). A study on the vulnerability analysis of the human population in the Marcellus Shale by Yelena Ogneva and Himmelberger Liyao Huang proves the same. The result of the study demonstrates that exploitation and environmental injustice transpires in areas where the poor population resides. This is reflected in the passage where Rich censures himself as responsible for his predicament, "Nobody forced him to sign away his mineral rights. That was his own cursed decision, motivated by fear of poverty"(Haigh 425).

Oil capitalism even jeopardises the prospects and livelihood of the ordinary people. Rich Devlin had let his land on lease, expecting to run a farm of his own. He may be able to buy cattle, but maintaining them will be difficult, "how do I raise them without a supply of clean water?" (Haigh 362). Devlin thinks about selling the land, which turns out to be illegal as the oil company can file a lien against the property. Thus, the property is neither helpful as collateral nor can he sell it.

Even the Mackeys who have been resisting the drilling business from docking in their land for two long years are indisputably disturbed by the presence of the fracking industry and are made vulnerable. As organic farmers, they are responsible for guaranteeing zilch chemical content in their land and water. With the commencement of hydraulic drilling in the surrounding lands, the Mackeys are probed about the purity of their water which is fed by the common water table of the neighbourhood. Even when Natalie Lavender, the

FARM TO TABLE restaurant owner, accepts that “Friend- Lean milk is the best I've found anywhere”, she is unable to continue business with them (Haigh 83). The customers of this bistro are interested in knowing the source of the products they buy. “When customers see Saxon Country in the menu, they think gas drilling” (Haigh 83). Natalie’s anxiety reflects the regional apprehensions related to fracking. The same uneasiness is replicated in the countenance of Ronny Zimmerman, proprietor of the Village Greengrocer, who “eyed her suspiciously, mistrust written on his face, creeping doubts about the purity of Friend-Lea milk” (Haigh 86). Thus the Mackeys lose their customers for no fault of theirs.

Thus the oil industry affects the sustainable livelihood of the region's inhabitants. Here, this ironic fate of the people whose possessions transform them into a politically and economically dispossessed community is visible. Essentially, these financial injuries triggered Rena of Friend Lea Farm to join the movement against fracking led by Lorne Trexler. During their meeting, she confesses, “I'm not very political” to which Trexler replies how nobody seems to be political “until it's too late” (Haigh 87). Thus, through her characters, Haigh is directing the readers to the dictum “The Personal is Political”. Thus fossil fuel drilling can no longer be viewed as an act that is innocuous or merely industry-oriented but is a public and private political choice that affects both economy and ecology. As an industry-oriented political system, fossil fuel exploration and excavation are inherently manipulative.

At no point does *Heat and Light* portray spectacular violence. Instead, it portrays the slow violence which transformed regions into resource colonies. Bakerton, for example, was colonised by the coal industry in the past decades and had endured its share of environmental exploitation and unbalanced job

prospects. Rich subtly remembers his uncle, Pat Devlin, “a coal miner, a factory slave” (Haigh 425). He worked at the coal mines only to die of mesothelioma, a cancer common among miners. Here an individual is expected to surrender his health in pursuit of prosperity. And when the mines closed, people lost their jobs, houses, and even their families (Haigh 405). The same violence is repeated in the second bout of colonialism, endangering the town and its people once more. Thus, Pennsylvania remains a “sacrifice zone” feeding the nation's energy needs even in the twenty-first century.

In conclusion, Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* and Jennifer Haigh's *Heat and Light* as oil stories successfully bring out the territorial impact of oil in extraction sites. Through the fiction investigated, the research identifies how oil as a resource directs the life of the citizens in American extraction sites proving the existence of peripheries that feed the energy needs of the affluent centre. Under the veneer of capitalist progress, oil modernity, and globalized economy lie the side-lined sacrificial extractive sites where disharmony and territorial colonization reign. Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* and Jennifer Haigh's *Heat and Light* successfully expose the same.

CHAPTER III

Hydrocarbon Cities: Petrotopia in the Gulf

"Courage, determination, and hard work are all very nice, but not so nice as an oil well in the back yard" - Mason Cooley

"Our country is always willing to lend a hand to the helpless, as long as they lend us a hand when we need to fill up our gas tanks." -Thor Benson

On September 11, 2001at 8:46 am, global terror politics underwent a severe scrutiny and drastic transformation. An aircraft carrying "10,000 gallons of jet fuel" ("The 9/11 Commission Report") darted into the World Trade Centre, a sixteen-acre commercial complex in New York and destroyed the North tower. Before long, at 9.03 am, the second airliner crashed into the 110-storied South Tower. Ninety minutes later, both the buildings collapsed. A third aircraft struck the Pentagon at 9.37 am, while at 10.03 the last of the hijacked commercial airplane which "aimed at the United States Capitol or the White House… was forced down by heroic passengers armed with the knowledge that America was under attack" ("The 9/11 Commission Report"). The vicious event killed around 3000 civilians. The event was planned and executed by Al-Qeda, an extremist militant group and its leader, Osama Bin- Laden. All the nineteen terrorists who personally coordinated the attack were killed in the attack. Consequently, the world and the US in particular attempted to answer queries about the motive behind the violence and means to avert more terrorist assaults.

Whatsoever the primary motive of the attack was, "the revelation that fifteen of the nineteen hijackers came from oil-rich U.S. ally Saudi Arabia" "(Huber xiii) had led to political critics questioning the "US oil consumption habits"(Huber xiii). According to them, the petroculture had "specific linkages to

emerging discourses of “terrorism”“(Huber xiii). Even though Saudi Arabia had denied involvement in the act, the act cannot be wholly delinked from energy politics. There was indeed discontent in the emergence of the oil industry among the citizens of Saudi Arabia, especially in its nascent stage. The chapter will analyse the origin and evolution of crude oil commerce in the Middle East, specifically Saudi Arabia with reference to Abdelrahman Munif’s *Cities of Salt.* Befor embarking on the study, a brief overview of the history of the oil industry in the Middle East is indicated.

In the early years of the twentieth century, William Knox D'Archy, one of the Australian Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company directors, decided to go on oil exploration in Persia. Eventually, he signed a petroleum concession in 1901 with Mozzafar-al-Din, Shah of Persia. It was a period when Persia depended on the rentier wealth and money that directed the political system. Being a biblical scholar, D'Archy believed that the malodorous crude oil was the liquid naphtha that burnt in the ancient fire temples and he frittered away his capital in this expedition. Even though oil was discerned in commercial quantity in 1908 at Musjid-al-Sulieman, he was forced to appeal to the oil conglomerates for financial support. Soon a financial consortium was formed with the Burmah Oil Company, giving rise to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company(APOC). Before long, Winston Churchill and the British Royal Navy entered the oil enterprise, which changed the geopolitical significance of the Middle East territory.

Historically, Persia or the Middle-East region was unsuitable for developing any industry. A system of concessions determined the economy of the country. Concessions bestowed “monopolistic rights to foreign investors and entrepreneurs over entire industries or specific projects in exchange for monetary

compensation" (Davoudi 5). Thus the industrialization process of the Middle East was imprudently contracted out to overseas actors who derived immense profit from them. Accordingly, the petroleum concessions promoted the influx of more nations and commercial communities to the land. These incidents eventually led to the development of oil infrastructures which changed the destiny of the Arab land.

For the naïve eyes, the Middle East was the *terra firma* of ostentatious riches where oil-sheikhs reigned over the mounted petro-dollars. However, the reality was convoluted. As Zalloum reveals, "The deserts of the Middle East became a giant playground in which the governments and corporations of richer countries bullied a group of poor, mostly Muslim people into handing over oil exploration rights for a song" (21). Accordingly, the autocratic Arab rulers and the imperialist powers preyed on the vulnerable population to churn money off the land. Thus, the orient and the occident, the native and the alien, the friend and the foe collaborated to swindle the populace.

Consequently, as Amitav Ghosh suggests, all the partakers in the "oil encounter" were in a state of discomfiture. This, in turn, had made this encounter "imaginatively sterile" (30). The capitalist concealments and the geographical barricades reinforced the subsequent creative aridity.

> A great deal has been invested in ensuring the muteness of the Oil Encounter: on the American (or Western) side, through regimes of strict corporate secrecy; on the Arab side, by the physical and demographic separation of oil installations and their workers from the indigenous population. (Ghosh 30)

In addition to this was the geological conspiracy by which "oil chose to be discovered in precisely those parts of the Middle East that have been the most marginal in the development of modern Arab culture and literature" (Ghosh 30). These, along with the genuine "slipperiness" of the oil, which tumbles "fiction into incoherence," had prevented the literary universe from fostering an oil fiction of its own (Ghosh 30). Nevertheless, as Ghosh suggests, few exceptions like Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* do survive in the Arab world, among which Abdelrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* is monumental. Being the pioneers of Arab modernism, these authors disrupted the "normative discourse" and created texts from the "violated memory of history" (Bashir 247).

Abdelrahman Munif was a petroleum economist with a decade of experience in the Syrian Oil ministry. He was also a consultant for the Organisation of Petroleum Countries (OPEC) while acting as the editor-in-chief of the journal *Oil and Development (Al-Nafṭ wa al-Tanmiyya)*. Before venturing into creative writing, he had written a book titled *The Principle of Partnership and the Nationalization of Arab Oil* in 1972, wherein he dealt with the emergence of oil capitalism and its effect on the Gulf countries. Thus he was a person destined to write a work like *Cities of Salt*, which, according to Edward Said, is the "only serious work of fiction that tries to show the effect of oil, Americans and local oligarchy on a Gulf country" (372). Amitav Ghosh formulated the term petrofiction to refer to oil-encounter novels while reviewing the quintet's first two novels.

Initially written in Arabic, *The Cities of Salt (Mudun al-Milh)* is an epic novel published between 1984 and 1989. The novel consists of five parts, namely, *Al-Teeh (The Wilderness,* 1984*), Al-Ukhdood (The Trench,* 1985*),*

Taqaseem Al-Layl Waa Al-Nahar (Variations on Day and Night, 1989*), Al-Munbatt (The Uprooted,* 1989*), Badiyat Al-Dhulumat (Desert of Darkness,* 1989*)*. The first three volumes were later translated into English by Peter Theroux and published by Knopf. According to Theroux, oil streams invisibly through each page of the narrative.

> Munif used oil to tell Arab stories… As a political thinker, it maddened him that oil wealth, instead of modernizing Arabian society, enthroned and perpetuated backward monarchies allied with primitive religious establishments as well as Western governments, and who, incidentally, stole huge amounts of that wealth.(Theroux)

Accordingly, Munif, in his *Cities of Salt*, "appropriated a multi-genre tool to assault both the Persian Gulf bourgeois elite and their alien collaborators" (Saeed 254-255). The thesis will analyse only the first volume of the monumental work titled *Cities of Salt* since the study focuses on the extraction sites inside the oil sacrifice zones. The volume spans between 1933 and 1953 and is set in a fictionalised land in the Persian Gulf called Mooran, often identified by critics as Saudi Arabia. The two imagined spaces in the fiction are Wadi-al-Uyon, the Edenic bedouin village and Harran, the oil installation centre. According to Karim Mattar, Wadi-al-Uyon is 'Ain Dar and Harran can be identified as the city of Dehran (99). Thus, Mooran, in all probability, refers to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Akin to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Mooran is also built in the first half of the twentieth century by the affluent ruling elite. Oil exploration in Saudi Arabia commenced in 1934 with an agreement between the Ibn Sa'ud regime and the Standard Oil of California (SOCAL). The treatise benefited the Saudi

Kingdom, whose earlier negotiations were declined by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. While the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was reluctant to pay the immediate loan of ten thousand dollars and the yearly rent of five thousand dollars in gold, SOCAL paid the regime a quick loan of twenty thousand dollars with an annual rent of five thousand dollars. Madawi Al-Rasheed, in *A History of Saudi-Arabia,* describes how the American company did not want to risk any chance and therefore agreed to the treatise immediately. According to Rasheed, owing to the American government's embargo on gold export, "SOCAL bought the gold in London and shipped it on a P&O steamer to Jedda" (88). This, in turn, assisted the Saudi regime in scuffling through the period of the Great Depression with few economic abrasions.

Abdelrahman Munif in the *Cities of Salt* narrates the history of "the first American oil company concession in the Persian Gulf, to the completion in 1950 of the Trans-Arabian Pipeline and, in the novel's explosive later pages, to the worker strikes that shook Dhahran in 1953" (Nixon 79). For the nascent state of Saudi Arabia, it was a period of optimistic anticipation. As Frederick Buell observes in "A Short History of Oil Cultures: Or, the Marriage of Catastrophe and Exuberance", oil appeared to the masses as having the ability to modernize "social life - sending out tentacles into people's private lifeworlds to change them in what seemed, to many (but not all), exuberantly positive ways" (283) .

The petro modern exuberance that often accompanies the discovery of oil is visible in the encouraging words of the emir. He informs the elders about the wealth under their feet with great enthusiasm.

> "Under our feet, Ibn Rashed, there are oceans of oil, oceans of gold, " replied the emir. " Our friends have come to extract the oil and the gold.

"…

They told us, 'There are oceans of blessings under this soil , ' and because they love blessings, because they are our friends, they agreed to come here and help us out." (Munif 86)

Even when the convoy of the elders of the Wadi-al-Uyon was doubtful about the Americans meandering in their land, the emir seemed to be nonchalant and sanguine. He instructs the Bedouins to aid the Americans in all possible manner. "They have come from the ends of earth to help us" (Munif 86). Most of the complaining elders trusted the emir and seemed satisfied by the response. One among the elder, Obaid al-Suweylemi remarks, "If the gold is under Wadi al-Uyoun then the depths of the earth are better than its face " (Munif 90). They take part in the dinner anticipating the prospects of a better life.

Even Abdelrahman Munif believed in this 'exuberant' nature of crude oil. This reverberates in the words he shares with Peter Theroux during a family dinner in Damascus, where they meet for the first time. Munif opines that "Oil is our one and only chance to build a future" (Theroux). In another interview with the Seattle writer Michael Upchurch for *Glimmer Train,* he reasserts that "[Oil] is really our one resource. This is our chance to use it to build a country that has something to do with these times" (qtd in Theroux).

Thus petromodernity was anticipated in the Middle East with great vigour. Petromodernity is associated with "perpetual growth, ceaseless mobility, and the expanded personal capacities associated with the past century's new flood of energy into our lives" (Wilson, Petrocultures 3). However, this modernism often gets misdirected, resulting in petrotopia or petroleum utopia, an "ideal end-state" far from idyllic (LeMenager 75). Petrotopia creates a space that

agitatedly annihilates and reorders “in the service of capital” (LeMenager 76). The social and ecological injuries are repressed in a petrotopia favouring oil prosperity and capitalist affluence.

Munif, in his *Cities of Salt,* creates an utopia in the imagined oasis of Wadi-al-Uyon as a foil to the petrotopia that the new Middle East has metamorphosised into.

> WADI AL-UYOUN: AN OUTPOURING OF GREEN amid the harsh, obdurate desert, as if it had burst from within the earth or fallen from the sky. It was nothing like its surroundings, or rather had no connection with them, dazzling you with curiosity and wonder: how had water and greenery burst out in a place like this?... For caravans, Wadi al-Uyoun was a phenomenon, something of a miracle, unbelievable to those who saw it for the first time and unforgettable forever after. (Munif 1-2)

Thus the valley with the palm trees and the rivulet was a haven in the cruel desert. The place where “good air and the sweetness of the water” was available “every day of the year” acted as a shelter for the caravans (Munif 2-3). The Edenic land is drawn in detail by Munif, describing the naïve populace, giving the reader an inside glimpse of the bedouin's austere life. The inhabitants of the Wadi were “known for their strange mixture of gentleness and obsession” (Munif 7). They were sceptical of people who engaged in haggling and bargaining and judged them with a stiff moral stance. According to them, the haggling “traders are devils in men's clothing- they haven't the slightest idea of right and wrong” (Munif 8).

The arrival of oil modernity which favours the discourse of materialism as an essential principle, into such land was difficult and complex. The Bedouins

first experienced petromodernity in its most catastrophic form. It presented itself in the form of sizeable oil-run iron machines from which "a sound of rolling thunder surged out" startling "men, animals and birds" of the Wadi" (Munif 68).

> Their deafening noise filled the whole wadi. So gigantic and strange were these iron machines that no one had ever imagined such things even existed; the lights that shone from them were like shooting stars… No one could describe the moment in which the machines moved into the wadi or know the feelings that gripped the people as they watched the huge yellow hulks move along and roar, then stop at the border of the camp.(Munif 98)

As Graeme MacDonald remarks in his essay, "Monstrous Transformers: Petrofiction and World Literature", "the voracious large independent mobile machines (or LIMMS) become petromodern origin symbols, offering humans (and narrators) unprecedented power and capacity with which to terraform landscape, population and environment." (14). Thus, with the oil concession, the imperialist power sowed the seeds of petromodernity through mechanised digging and drilling.

The inhabitants of the valley are suspended in a vague impasse. The initial fear they experienced soon turns into curiosity about "how the lights and sound were produced" in the machinery (Munif 68). The inquisitive boys run over to these "yellow iron hulks" to feel them ", and upon feeling the hardness of the iron, they put their palms against it and strike it lightly as if gently knocking on a door that must open" (Munif 98-99). The men who kept a distance from the diabolical machines found confidence in this and "soon decided to do what the boys were doing, because that way they might learn what the machines were for

and what they might do" (Munif 99). As Munif depicts in the novel, these "were moments of serious scrutiny, of fear and surprise" (Munif 99).

At the moment, the Wadi people experience the engines and contraptions of petromodernity with a magical ambivalence. As Graeme MacDonald highlights, "The petro-world appears as if by magic and as magic itself: estranged and unprecedented, if indescribably real" ("Monstorous Transformers" 20). The exuberance did lead the inhabitants. They believed in the promise of the emir: "all they knew was that the Americans would extract gold and oil from the earth, though they could not even guess how that could be done" (Munif 101). Men like Ibn Rasheed were convinced about the reverie of petromodernity. Generous hospitality and abundant attention were visible in his speech and action. "Ibn Rashed inwardly believed that there was great gain to be had from these men" (Munif 32). Thus, the "words *rich* and *gold* hung in the air like smoke" (Munif 95).

Meanwhile, the oil elites plunged themselves into the products of petromodernity. This is evident in the metropolitan city of Harran, where the oil elites are invited to the clubhouse and the emir is introduced to the hunting rifles. He also goes for a boat ride. The experience was new to them: "It was the first time that any of the men had travelled on water" (Munif 278). Later the emir was also gifted with a telescope. The emir "was thoroughly delighted when he put the telescope to his eye and looked in this and that direction, and pointed and laughed with pleasure and surprise" (Munif 397). The Americans later presented him with different kinds of weapons and luxurious cars. Thus the emir and the oil elites immersed themselves in the materialistic aspects of petromodernity.

This modernity was inspired and driven by the geological resources buried under the desert land.

However, for the common population, all these were the acts of the djinns. Ibn Naffeh, on hearing about the telescope, exclaims: “From the first day the Americans came, they brought demons, sins and catastrophes, and no one knows what will happen in these next days”(Munif 398). The radio and the telephone that were introduced into the household of the emir baffled the commoners. All these petromodern extravaganzas were built at the expense of the common population. As Muttit points out in his article, “Equity, Climate Justice and Fossil Fuel Extraction: Principles for a Managed Phase Out.”, “[t]he beneficiaries of extraction are often distant from those adversely affected, a problem made worse by the prevalence of corruption in relation to extraction” (5). The average population was often left with the wrath of petromodernity. Soon the malevolence of the machine in its full capability is revealed to the people of the valley “on whom multinational petroculture enacts its will” (MacDonald, “Monstorous Transformers” 20).

This emerging “catastrophe did not simply remain on the periphery of exuberance” (Buell 282). Its oil-fed mechanical claws did pronounce the apocalyptic end of the oasis. The carnage of Wadi-al-Uyon reached its conclusion with the razing of “a brook, and trees, and community of people” (Munif 106). The men and nature succumbed to the will of the petromodernity with little resistance.

> They all looked at the strange scene before them as if it were a dream or a hallucination, but the line of neatly parked tractors, and the deadly silence that reigned over the new land-for the wadi now looked

> like part of the desert beyond, except for the hills and the heaps of ruined trees-convinced them that it was real: a cruel, wicked sight that resembled death. (Munif 110)

Thus, the Bedouin land of Wadi and the sand-filled desert region of Harran changed and were soon taken over by the petrocapitalist forces. The exuberance exalted the powerful personas in the emirate, while the workers and the inhabitants faced the catastrophe of the oil discovery. Before long, ideological persuasions and counterfeit assurances that smothered the ordinary people gave way to coercion and intimidation. With its cavernous attention to seizing the oil territory, the oil companies restructured the weaker periphery, paving the way for oil capitalism.

Oil capitalism refers to an "oil based economy" where oil acts as a significant commodity "that is the object of the collective interest of not only capitalists around the world, but also of nation-states, transnational corporations and classes" (Aborisade 35-36). Contrary to manufacturing capitalism, petrocapitalism is "territorial imperative"(Rutledge 4). Therefore, petroleum companies constantly search for oil territories where oil can be drilled. In the case of Saudi Arabia, SOCAL entered the capitalist oil race competing with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company to climb the hegemonic hierarchies and locate America as one of the most significant world power. In the meantime, for Ibn Saud, whose recently formed country was "the poorest in the world, with no infrastructure to speak of", petrocapitalism offered steps to ascend into economic prosperity (Zalloum 93).

The primary feature of petrocapitalism is the treatment of oil as a commodity. This is noticeable where the emir and other oil elites conceive the

crude oil resource as “gold” and nothing more. Being a capitalist commodity, oil, which was considered a menace when burnt as naphtha, suddenly becomes desirable. The affluence and modernity the commodity promised tend to obscure the budding trauma.

As in all oil-states, the sail alongside petrocapitalism “intrinsically and continuously fuels contradictions and conflict” in the Gulf region (Aborisade 38). One major conflict evident is between the oil company and the community in the oil territory. In the fiction analysed, this severity of the conflict is enhanced by the cultural difference and asymmetrical power weightage between the two factions. Even when the promise of exuberance existed, the first encounter between the Bedouins and the foreign oil engineers was complicated.

The Bedouin tribe's most respected elderly patriarch, Miteb-al-Hathal had his qualms and reservations about the foreign men ever since he heard about them from his son, Fawas. His urgent visit to Ibn Rasheed's house to meet them and his decision to stay there at night reveals the same. He is cynical about the presence of foreigners in the desert, which contains nothing but “dust, sand and starvation” (Munif 29). According to him, “they are devils”, and their knowledge of the Koran made Miteb more suspicious (Munif 29).

Here Munif, while narrating the oil tale, portrays the oil history of the Arabian land and the American empire. As Ian Rutledge points out, “for many years the objectives of the integrated, multinational major oil companies owning refineries in the USA was in exploiting low-cost oil reserves abroad and importing these into the USA at commensurately low prices” (5). However, religion actively obstructed the entry of capitalism. For the Arabs in the Middle – East, the Americans who believed in a different God were infidels.

As observed by Zalloum, God was the central element that has "dominated not just the story of oil in the Middle East, but also the relationship between the West and the Arab world" (22). The Westerners, especially the Americans engaged in an imperialist capitalist conquest, wanted to ensure that nothing like a pan-Islamic movement (that earlier existed to save the Ottoman empire in the 1920s) would resurface. Therefore, they tried to ensure that Islam's values, dictums, and culture were not threatened.

This is represented in *The Cities of Salt,* where Fawaz reports to his father, Miteb-al-Hathal, about the arrival of the "[t]hree foreigners with two marsh Arabs" (Munif 26). Surprisingly, they spoke in Arabic and made sure that the religious sentiments of the Bedouins were treated with reverence. Consequently, when Ibn Rasheed asked them to repeat, "There is no god but God and Muhammad is His prophet", the Americans did it without any dilemma. This was an effective tactic on the part of the Americans, who knew beforehand how the Arabs considered the Non-Muslims as infidels. As the Saudi historian Al-Rasheed points out, a year before the signing of the oil concession, Saudi Arabia had lesser than fifty non-Muslim residents (88). Most of them lived in cosmopolitan cities away from the oil territories. "While early 'infidels' were largely based in the cosmopolitan Hijaz, the American exploration team ventured into territories where they had never been seen" (Al-Rasheed 88). This made the encounter between the orient and the occident more tense. This strained relationship is made evident by Munif in the novel.

> The wadi's inhabitants, who at first viewed the three foreigners with scorn and laughed when they saw them carrying bags of sand and rock, grew more surprised when they discovered that the three knew a lot about

> religion, the desert, the bedouin's life and the tribes. The profession of faith they repeated whenever asked, and their scriptural citations, moved many people of the wadi to wonder among themselves if these were jinn, because people like them who knew all those things and spoke Arabic yet never prayed were not Muslims and could not be normal humans. (Munif 31-32)

As Ellen McLarney, indicates, the people in the Wadi regarded the Americans as "devils (*afarit*), demons (*jinni*), and satans (*shayatin*)" (193). For them, the act of oil drilling signifies the American's attempt to quench the thirst of the jinn "burning in the belly of the earth" (Munif 126).

However, the hostility between them was not regulated by religion alone. The cultural ignorance of the east about the west and vice versa had also contributed to the antagonism. The emir appeased the community, but they remained dubious about the half-clad Americans who "spend the noon hours of each day in the sun, stretched out on their faces, with nothing covering their bodies but short trousers" (Munif 78). The men of the Wadi were offended by the act, and they prevented their women who used to pass by the camp to collect water from the brook, from carrying out their chores. Thus, the "discussions of the bands of devils, at first very general and neutral, soon grew harsh and vehement" (Munif 80).

When the capitalist machinery touched the Wadi with its metallic hands, the revered elder, Miteb al-Hathal, wanted to resist them. He was aware of the emerging catastrophe and proclaimed war against them, "The devils are here and we must fight them. If we do nothing, they'll eat us up and we'll leave no trace behind!" (Munif 99). Yet, no one stood by him, leaving Miteb disappointed.

However, his prophecy turned true; Wadi al-Uyon was butchered until everything was gone and the Bedouins were reduced to as the most "miserable sort of commodity" in the hands of the capitalist bourgeois. (Al-Shraah 321)

The second category of conflict evident in the fiction is between the oil community and the capitalist oil elites. Here the capitalist oil elite include the oligarchic emir who reveals to the people of the Wadi that the Americans had arrived upon his invitation: "We invited them, and they have come to help us…Our friends have come to extract the oil and the gold" (Munif 86). Historically, Ibn Saud established the Kingdom of Saud in 1932 and the principal income of the land was from the pilgrims who visited Mecca. With the emergence of the world economic depression, the developing country faced an immense financial crisis. "Officials' salaries were substantially in arrears and the government borrowed money from most of the commercial companies in Jeddah . . .The oil concession resulted in immediate relief" (Al-Rasheed 89).

Cities of Salt is set in a period of dire financial crisis. Therefore when upheavals emerged from the Wadi, the emir who anticipates quick oil revenue attempts to amend the hostility of the community by promising them "money up to [their] ears" (Munif 87). However, when a voice of dissent emerges from Miteb al- Hathal, he points to the sword placed against the wall and proclaims: "We have only one medicine to troublemakers: that" (Munif 87). Later, when the Wadi is destroyed and the people refuse to leave, he uses the aggression of the Desert Forces to relocate the community.

The use of the state military apparatus is customary in all the oil extraction zones. "Any system based on the exploitation of the overwhelming majority by a tiny minority can only survive by repressing the other class

violently" (Aborisade 34). In the novel, the emir uses the Desert Forces to inform the community about his decision to lend the valley to foreign oil seekers. "The emir has said good riddance to anyone who wants their desert and tribe, but for those who want a place to live, the government is arranging everything" (Munif 111). Thus coercion is employed by the oligarchic government to meet its needs.

The government continued the hostile behaviour towards the working class in Harran too. When Khaled al- Mishari took charge as the new emir, there were rumours about the dictatorial rule that may arise in the future.

> They told how he ordered executions for the slightest of crimes and would take pity on no one, not even his own brother; his mission in Harran was to make the town as peaceful as a graveyard… This terrified many of the townspeople, and those who were not terrified were shaken by the waiting and anticipation. (271)

Before Harran was transformed into an oil metropolitan, the city was ruled by Ghafel al-Suweyd, who was "half asleep most of the time he spent in Harran" (271). This change in power assertion is motivated by the economic revolution brought by oil money. As Paul Collier argues, oil revenues cultivate an autocratic political order where "the survival of the fittest" is evident (42). Thus, most of the countries in "[the] Middle East, where oil supplies are concentrated" are "uniformly autocratic" (42). In the Arab Harran, the emir sent his secret agents to spy on the workers, "Using means of terror and persuasion and with promises galore, a number of the emir's men were placed among the workers. They were called observers" (Munif 296).

Later on, Khaled provides the oil conglomerates with a military guard unit to silence the resentments and protests of his own citizens. "Their mission

would be to protect installations and bar all approaches to them, in coordination with the emergency forces in the compound" (Munif 589). However, the workers' indignation in the oil town finds voice and reaches its peak with their chanting of the mob commanded by Salman al-Zamel.

"Johar, tell your rulers

The pipeline was built by beasts of prey.

We will safeguard our rights.

The Americans do not own it.

This land is our land." (Munif 592)

The slogan clearly shows the discordance getting more tense. The workers and the Bedouins question the hegemony of the emir, "was he their emir, there to defend and protect them, or was he the American's emir?" (Munif 595).

Similar deception is evident in the character of Ibn Rasheed, a bureaucratic agent who had stood along with the emir and supported the doings of the American oil companies in all possible manner. Once Wadi is annihilated, he disappears and becomes the representative of the American camp. He had conveyed the emir's promise of compensation to the people and declared that the priority of jobs would go to the people of the Wadi. When the people of Wadi are displaced and move to Harran, he consoles the community with his fake promises: "Have no fear, my friend, for blessings have come… with regard to the compensation due to each one of you, have no fear. .. every man will get his due and then some" (Munif 182). Nevertheless, when the time came, many, including Fawas and Suweyleh were denied the job for petty reasons. This produces hostility between Ibn Rashed and the community and the Bedouins of the Wadi detest him. According to the populace,

> "Ibn Rashed has gone roaming east and west and gathered people from the four corners of the earth and handed them over to the Americans. He's handed the sheep over to the wolf, and for every beast, for every head of them, he gets his money from the Americans and they ask him, 'Have you got any more of these?' and he runs off and gathers more and tells them, 'Here you are!' And he and the Americans are like hellfire, never quenched, never satisfied." (Munif 371)

The deception of the bureaucratic oil elite in association with the oil capitalists is stated with precision by Munif in these lines.

The community had strained relationships with Johar and Naim Sh'eira who were the Desert Forces chief and the Americans' translator, respectively. Johar used to talk with the Arab workers in the initial days. One day while he was chatting with the workers, an American arrived by their side. As soon as Johar noticed him, "he began cursing the workers and hitting them with his baton, telling them to get back to work before he threw them all into prison!" (Munif 596). This shows how the Bedouin community was preyed upon by the imperialists and the oil elites and expelled from the advantages of oil money and petromodernity. As MacDonald comments, "A secret but pervasive surveillance regime is installed, capacious bureaucracy emplaced and a disciplinary managerialist regime emerges, destabilizing unions and binding state elites and the police force to oil-refinery management" ("Monstorous Transformer" 18).

In the novel, the emir and the American oil company deal with the petrocapitalist antagonism in Wadi- Ul-Uyon diplomatically and cautiously. Nevertheless, the racial and class conflicts become more manifest and vicious when the setting of the novel is shifted to Harran. Class consciousness is evident

when the novel focuses on the new territory where the company workers are segregated as the powerless working class. At the same time, a privileged few and the American engineers who supported the emir and the oil capitalists found capital affluence and material prosperity. These lead to "conflicts between workers and the oil companies and workers and the state, " a significant feature of a petrocapitalist state (Aborisade 35).

This conflict between workers and the oil conglomerate requires detailed analysis. American oil capitalism drove the inhabitants of Wadi to the urbanised and hostile metropolitan city of Harran. However, the Americans they met in Harran differed from those at Wadi. Now that the oil territory was in the imperialist control, they found it needless to be diplomatic to the "uncivilized" Arabs: "At first the Americans had laughed and slapped them on the shoulders. Now they did not look at them or if they did, spat out words that could only be curses" (Munif 301). The conflict grew more severe when "the relationship between the two sides was curtailed and handled only through the "personnel office"" (Munif 302). The oil elites like Ibn Rasheed, in the meantime, expected them "to work hard and obey them as if [the workers] were their servants" (Munif 182). Thus the workers are alienated in the petrocapitalist system creating more schism and conflict.

In many of his works, Karl Marx illustrated this concept of alienation or *entfremdung* encountered by the proletariats suspended in a capitalist system. From a political and socio-cultural standpoint, he approaches the different kinds of alienation the workers face in his text, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. These include alienation from the product of labour,

alienation from the process of labour, estrangement from others and isolation from their species-essence (*Gattungswesen*).

From the earlier analysis of the text, the distancing of the Bedouin community from crude oil as a capitalist product is evident. For them, oil was the naphtha that "light these lamps of [theirs] that choke [them] with fumes before they shed light" (Munif 95). Similarly, the alienation from the process of labour is manifested in the words of Fawas, who did the same job as Shaalan, yet "when they asked about Shaalan's work, he could not say anything very clear; he said that he dug holes in the ground, nothing else but that!" (Munif 161). For Fawas, the Americans were exhausting the waters of the Wadi "through iron sheaths and pumping the waters into holes they had dug in the ground, why and for how long it was impossible to tell" (Munif 161). Thus Munif unmistakably articulates the estrangement of the working community from oil and its extractive processes in the novel.

Similarly, Munif forcefully depicts the estrangement the workers experience within the community in the city of Harran. Even when there was an "endless influx of new people" into the proletarian town, dealings between people grew "wary and full of apprehensions" (Munif 247).

> The evening gatherings the workers held, to sing, tell jokes and spring surprises on one another, to cheer themselves up, usually ended with new wounds. Instead of cheering them up, the songs filled the men with intense gloom. The stories that made them laugh loudly when first heard went stale, and many of the men were surprised that they had ever laughed at them at all. (Munif 295)

This shows how the Arab workers who live in the mechanised city lose their species essence. Later, they comprehend how the Americans treat them as lesser beings. Thus the unnamed worker expresses his anger when he shouts out their disgraceful status: “we're no better than animals to them” (Munif 216). In another instance, Sinclair, the American engineer, pokes his companions, points out the Arab workers dancing in a wedding ceremony and exclaims: “They're like animals- jostling each other and moving around in this primitive way to express their happiness” (Munif 267). For the occident, the orient was merely a spectacle, and the Americans “could not stop taking pictures” (Munif 267).

The novel reveals how the workers had but minimal rights of their own. They were often suspended from work without any genuine reason or explanation. This is voiced by a worker who remarks, “They just threw us out without giving a reason, as if we had no rights”(Munif 386). This irreverence toward the Arabs is manifested forcefully in the novel when Hamilton, the capitalist spokesperson, meets the emir to discuss the compensation for Mizban, the Arab young man who died in an accident at the worksite. He informs him that “compensation for any subsequent accidents, whether loss of life, total or partial disability, loss or injury of limb or organ, eye, leg or ear, or even less serious injuries; the compensations would be generous, just as if the Arabs were regular people!” (Munif 367). The condescension and patronising tone of Americans is hidden behind the benevolent act.

Consequently, the discordance between the American and the Arab camp grows and the class divisions become highly perceptible, especially with the emergence of different barracks for the two sects.

> The shift ended, and all the men drifted home to the two sectors like streams coursing down a slope, one broad and one small, the Americans to their camp and the Arabs to theirs, the Americans to their swimming pool, where their racket could be heard in the nearby barracks behind the barbed wire. When silence fell, the workers guessed that the Americans had gone into their air-conditioned rooms whose thick curtains shut everything out: sunlight, dust, flies and Arabs. (Munif 391)

This is in fact, a faithful reflection of history. While "American employees enjoyed, for instance, living originally in corrugated metal and cement huts, all non-Anglo Saxon employees were to be given and expected to be content with less" (Vitalis 56). The Arab workers in the oil camps "lived in thatched, palm-frond and floorless huts, known as 'barastis,'… after Americans moved into permanent housing, with air conditioning among other amenities" (Vitalis 56).

However, the personnel office assured the workers that the company would build houses for them. Thus, each worker will be able to bring his family and "return from work every night to his own house and children"(Munif 594). The promise was repeated several times for "years on end, but not a single house was built, and the workers remained huddled and cramped in the accursed barracks, which grew hotter and filthier with every passing day" (Munif 594). This specific status of the proletariats is well-explained by Marx, according to whom "labour produces wonderful things for the rich—but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces—but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty—but for the worker, deformity" (88).

Nevertheless, these class concessions and advantages enjoyed by the inhabitants of the American Harran do not go unquestioned. Voices of dissent

are heard from the Arab camp producing more capitalist incongruities. “Why did they have to live like this, while the Americans lived so differently? …Why did the American shout at them, telling them to move, to leave the place immediately, expelling them like dogs?” (Munif 596). The anger of the proletariats mounted up with time, putting them in a seditious position. The harshest of this rebellion became detectable during the construction of the oil pipelines when chants filled the air like roaring thunder.

“Stone by stone, we constructed,

Inch by inch, we built the pipe.

Now that we have built and raised,

What do you say, O company, O God!

God is our witness, you have no rights.

Our rights are everlasting, they are ours.

With our blood and sweat we will achieve them!” (Munif 597)

The capitalist class is thus intimidated by the imminent emergence of petro-violence where the oil infrastructures are prone to be annihilated to make a political statement. Therefore Hamilton, the chief of the American Harran, is coerced to rehire the twenty-three workers they had suspended without sufficient reason. The translator for Hamilton clearly explains to the emir, “The important thing now is that the strikers keep away from oil installations” (Munif 587). The company is overawed with the fear of sabotage, and they wonder whether the workers might start a fire.

In the “Foreward” to his book *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, Robert Vitalis indicates how ARAMCO's oil operation in the oil metropolitan of Dehran “was a system of privilege and inequality” (xiii). He

even blames the historians for ignoring the documentation of "the movement that emerged to challenge this hierarchy in the oil camps, beginning with the first strike by Saudi workers in 1945" (xiii). Nevertheless, Munif represents the event faithfully in his fictionalised historical epic. The worker's strike portrayed in the fiction is undoubtedly the labour strike that spontaneously erupted in Dhahran during the 1940s. Curiously, these kinds of petro-violence can be noticed in all the oil territories in the world. As described by Michael Watts in his "Petro-violence" included in *Fuelling Culture 101:*

> The world of oil and gas is and has been saturated with violence: symbolic, cultural, political, ecological, and economic. Oil bears the hallmark of what Hannah Arendt, echoing Marx in volume 1 of Capital (1867), called "the original sin of primitive accumulation", dripping with blood and dirt. The annals of oil are an uninterrupted chronicle of naked aggression and the violent law of the corporate frontier. This violence is palpable and existential. (258)

Thus, Abdelrahman Munif exposes various modes of petro-violence dominant in the petrocapitalist society of the Middle East in his novel, *The Cities of Salt*. The proletarian revolution enticed by the suspension of the twenty-three workers and the murder of Mufaddi al-Jeddan at the order of Johar, the commander of the Desert Army are all instances of this mode of spectacular violence. During the strike, "the workers smashed the gate, tore up the notices and destroyed the bulletin board" (Munif 586). While Johar ordered his commanders "to teach them what red death is. Break their bones. Curse their grandfathers and have no mercy." (Munif 583)

Along with all the discordances mentioned above, the devouring of smaller business houses by large capitalist corporations can also be detected in the fiction. Raji and Akoub are truck drivers who had reached Harran from Armenia and Syria, respectively, with the materialisation of petromodernity in the region. They had a decorous relation wherein "they had little to say to one another" except "about the road conditions and how the business was faring" (Munif 473). Later, Raji treated "Akoub with never-ending provocations and curses" (Munif 476). However, with the centralisation of a larger capital, their small business in the town declined, especially with the emergence of industrial tycoons like Hassan Rizaie and Mohieddin al-Naqib. The bigger corporations attempt to shatter the small business of Raj and Akoub. When Rizaie opens his road service with eight trucks, Raj and Akoub collectively resist the capitalist by consolidating their trucks. Rizaie was instigated and ordered his drivers to "Get rid of Raji and Akoub. Kill them, crash into them on the road, and they'll die God's death or end up slaves" (Munif 490). Rizaie and al-Naqib, in their attempt to put down the two truck owners, indulge in capitalist scheming. They, "began to transport goods and passengers to and from Harran at no charge, or for a minimal fee" (Munif 491). Thus, in this fictionalised oil territory, the oil culture essentializes capitalistic materialism as a principle in which the existing world order is forced to restructure.

Accordingly, Munif depicts in his novel a "set of collusions—between empire, petro-capitalism, and the House of Saud" (Nixon 82). However, this association between the empire and the emirate was not without impediments. The emirate's dependency on the oil rentier revenue provided by the American empire silenced the emir to the point of political violence. For instance, when

people clamoured for compensation for the oil worker, Mizban's death, the emir appealed to the company to do so. However, the company stubbornly refused to pay even a nominal amount as compensation. On another occasion, when Hamilton, the deputy chief of the American emissary, met the emir to discuss the new projects the company would be undertaking in the Wadi and Harran, the emir remained silent, "only listening and nodding" (Munif 430). Later, when Hamilton outlined his decisions on how the rebellions in Harran should be dealt with, the emir simply agreed to it by stating that "the Americans thought of everything, that they were ready for anything" (Munif 590). Thus, the oil corporation and the imperialist nation collaborate with the oil state and even attain a stalwart role in legislation and setting regulations.

The fictionalised depiction of the passive emir is significant in the analysis, especially if read in relation to the country's history. Historically, the United States has supervised the creation of Saudi Arabia:

> Soon after American prospectors had made their first oil strike in the Persian Gulf, the United States oversaw the creation and "independence" of Saudi Arabia; and so, through a gesture of simultaneous decolonization and colonization, an outpost of "nature's nation" was engineered into birth. The new nation's "natural" bounty was promoted from the outset as imminent wealth for all its newly minted "independent" citizens, while simultaneously being privatized by imperial need and familial monopoly. (Nixon 81)

Thus Saudi had undergone decolonisation from the Ottoman Empire, followed by a neo-colonisation by the capitalist oil conglomerates before transforming itself into an autonomous oil state. However, its autonomous status

was often repudiated by the neo-colonial American empire. Robert Vitalis in *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* describes an incident wherein the American ambassador, J. Rives Childs, describes the Saudi oil territory as an "American oil colony" (31). In another instance, President Roosevelt had confided to his close associates that "he could do anything that needed to be done with Ibn Saud with a few million dollars" (Miller 200). Here, Saudi is invisibly colonised and acts as a resource colony for the US. With the promise of exuberance, the American colonizers had silenced the government and metamorphosed the region into a "nature-exporting" society (Nixon 81). Thus one could observe how Munif sets his novel in the "oil encounter's extractive vortex" and gives "imaginative dimension to the hydrocarbon force fields" thereby revealing the symbolic and political violence contained in the "petroleum-driven promises, seductions, coercions, betrayals, and catastrophes" that contour the Middle East (Nixon 74).

Even nature which, according to the Bedouin tradition, was a communal property is reorganised in the capitalist discourse as the government's property. Thus Ibn Rasheed informs the population that it is the "government's privilege to take and give out land" (Munif 252). Nature is aggressively altered unrecognisably according to the capitalist scheme. Munif, in his novel, uses forceful vocabulary to describe the butchery of Wadi. "The tractors attacked the orchards like ravenous wolves, tearing up the trees and throwing them to the … the tractors turned to the next with the same bestial voracity and uprooted them" (106). The colossal "trees shook violently and groaned before falling, cried for help, wailed, panicked, called out in helpless pain and then fell entreatingly to

the ground" (Munif 106). They tried to cuddle themselves into "the earth to grow and spring forth alive again" (Munif 106).

Like the colossal trees described above, the oasis and the people struggle to be reborn. Wadi-al Uyon had changed; it "bore no resemblance to the one that had been there before" (Munif 133). When Fawaz returned to the Wadi, everything had changed. "Even the fresh breezes that used to blow at this time of the year had become hot and searing in the daytime, and a bitter cold penetrated his bones late at night" (Munif 135). In fact with the destruction of the natural ecology of the valley, an anthropogenic climate change is initiated in the region. This gradual alteration in the climate is noticeable in the capitalist industrial city of Harran. Instead of summer arriving slowly, with "rising heat and humidity," it assaulted the city "with searing winds and tumultuous sandstorms" (Munif 374). The elders opined that "they had not seen such a spring in long years, and others said that there had never been a drought like this one" (Munif 376).

For Ibn Naffeh, these changes were caused by the demons under their soil. He warns the people about the demons: "before long they'll take over everything, for within every creature dwells a small black demon, which grows ever bigger unless man makes some effort to kill it"(Munif 376). Presently, the world seems to be aware of this demonic oil spirit and is attempting to tackle the extractive culture that creates these climate variations. The Paris Agreement of 2015 has requested the currently operational extractive sites to slow down the extractive process to maintain global warming beneath 1.5 degree Celsius. Thus, Munif, in his *Cities of Salt*, obliquely addresses the issue of greenhouse emissions in the extractive sites.

Another environmental issue discussed by Munif in the novel is the scarcity of water. The Middle East had always been a water-stressed region. However, Wadi al-Uyon was a place where “water and greenery burst out” and “sweetness of the water” was “available every day of the year” (Munif 1-3). Three reservoirs in Wadi were never empty. However, when the oil company began the drilling process in search of oil, the inhabitants of Wadi were staggered. The American oil workers fetched “large quantities of water dozens of times a day and [used] it wastefully as if it were some plentiful commodity of little importance” (Munif 83). When the Bedouins complained about the foreigners' improvident treatment of water, the emir replied to them injudiciously. “If it's water that's bothering you, don't worry. We'll dig you one hundred wells to take the place of those three, if not there then somewhere else, just as you like. That's a minor matter” (Munif 88). Here the emir considers water to be immeasurable and inexhaustible. The only person who realised the significance of water was the patriarch of Wadi, Miteb al-Hathal. He, while drinking from the brook, observes, “the wadi would be nothing if the water stopped. . . his garden and the land before and beyond it, to the end of the wadi, would be nothing if the Americans wanted to stop the water” (Munif 104). The novel thus portrays how the slow violence on the oil state was felt with unparalleled magnitude and had unalterable effects. Here the perception of violence is delayed and, as a result, often invisible. However, its consequences cannot be disparaged. As Rob Nixon remarks, “slow violence is often not just attritional but also exponential, operating as a major threat multiplier; it can fuel long-term, proliferating conflicts in situations where the conditions for sustaining life become increasingly but gradually degraded” (3).

Presently, all the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries except Oman are named water-scarce nations by the UN, among which Saudi Arabia is one of the most impoverished in rejuvenating water reserves. Erica DeNicola, in her article "Climate Change and Water Scarcity: The Case of Saudi Arabia ", highlights the increasingly Westernised and consumerism-based shift in lifestyle" as the raison d'être "for Saudi Arabia's water-starved status" (342). According to him, "precious groundwater sources" in the country "have been injudiciously used over many years to the point of depletion" (344). While analysing Munif's quintet, Nixon scrutinises this alteration of culture and its effect on ecology. According to Nixon in "*Cities of Salt,* we witness the Americans (in collusion with a far-off emir) uproot the water-based culture and supplant it, without explanation or consultation, with a petroleum-fixated culture" (80). Thus oil and petromodernity that ensued ingested the groundwater of the land leading to further desertification.

Such psychological desertification can also be witnessed in the displaced people of the valley. As Munif describes in the novel, "Wadi al-Uyoun's people" were "like its waters". They "flooded out in times of overabundance" (Munif 5). Thus emigration was part of their culture. However, with the emergence of the petro-despots, the people of the Wadi are derided as disposable people and are forcefully displaced from their land. As for Fawas, the departure from the Wadi was "a breaking off, like death, that nothing and no one could ever heal" (Munif 120-121). Nevertheless, the inhabitants who undergo such trauma are denied the primary beneficiary status. The oil encounter "is characterized by a blind sense of entitlement by those engaged in extracting oil and a sense of puzzlement by

those native to the land whose space and culture have been invaded" (Szeman, Energy Humanities 620).

Here, the community is involuntarily relocated to regions alien to them. "For the first time in their lives, places seemed hostile; they were so awfully cruel" (Munif 24). This forceful exile fills the people with a dilemma evident in Wadha al-Hamad's words: "Was it possible for them to depart and leave everything behind? Could they survive the move to another place after losing their homes, land and livelihoods" (Munif 120). For the inhabitants of Wadi, who were suddenly transformed into refugees, the new places they moved into "seemed hostile" and "awfully cruel" (Munif 124). Munif describes how even the animals seem to feel the grief of displacement like the camels which "plodded on monotonously" (Munif 125).Wadi al-Uyon and its people "were all scattered under the stars, some in the east and some in the west" (Munif 225). The cracked opened land thus witnesses the turmoils of displaced and homeless people.

As for Shaalan, who had stayed back in Wadi al-Uyon, the experience was horrific. He stays back in the valley "that bore no resemblance to the one that had been before, except in name" (Munif 133). Even his identity is lost. He learned English and became identified as "Company Shaalan" or "American Shaalan" instead of Shaalan al-Miteb. His sense of belonging to his own tribe was taken away from him, and he wonders, "How is it possible for people and places to change so entirely…Can a man adapt to new things and new places without losing a part of himself" (Munif 134). In this context, Shaalan is staggered by what Rob Nixon describes as "stationary displacement" or "displacement without moving" (Nixon 19).

Stationary displacement refers to a situation where people are trapped in their own land, which is no longer recognisable or familiar. Instead, the region loses the “very characteristics that made it habitable” and warm (Nixon 19). This is portrayed in the novel where Shaalan. Suweyleh and Fawas wonder about the state of the oasis. “In this place, inside the barbed wire, they felt so foreign that they could not imagine that it had once been their home, or indeed they had a home anywhere” (Munif 142).

Such a kind of displacement often leads to “solastalgia”, a term coined by Glenn Albrecht, an Australian philosopher and first introduced at the Ecohealth Conference in Montreal in May 2005. Solastalgia consigns “to the pain or distress caused by the loss of, or inability to derive, solace connected to the negatively perceived state of one's home environment”. This is experienced “when there is the lived experience of the physical desolation of home” (Albrecht 95). This is an earth-related psychoterratic illness that is evident in the novel through the characters of Wadha and Umm Khosh. While the trauma of displacement results in Wadha losing her power of speech, Umm Khosh is shattered to a serious extent and dies from heartbreak.

In addition to these, such temporal and geographical displacements “smooth the way for amnesia, as places are rendered irretrievable to those who once inhabited them” (Nixon 7). This is portrayed in the words of Khosh, who returns to the tribe. When the Bedouins enquire about Wadi al-Uyon, he informs them that “he had passed through there and not recognised anything; had it not for Shalaan and Ibn Rasheed, he would not have known it was Wadi al-Uyon at all” (Munif 171). Here the oasis has been modified to such a state that Khosh finds it challenging to recognise the place where he had spent his whole life.

The same kind of amnesia can also be witnessed in the industrial city of Harran. Harran was originally a coastal town that the American capitalists altered into an oil city. When the two Harranis. Muhammad al-Seif and Abdullah al-Saad return to Harran after years of exile,they are unable to identify their land, "they thought they were lost, and for a moment, Abdullah thought he was dreaming. He rubbed his eyes and stared, but he recognized only the two palm trees by the mosque: that was all that had not changed. There was no sign of Harran" (Munif 311). They are overcome with revulsion and are perplexed by their sights, "Why had the Harran they knew been demolished? Where were their families-what had happened to them? Were they themselves capable of living in this Harran they did not know and had never lived in?" (Munif 312).

Thus both Wadi al-Uyon and Harran can be seen as sacrifice zones of the emirate. The petrocapitalists treated the people in the region as "no more deserving of rights than raw commodities" (Klein 161). The social and environmental sacrifices requited by the oil industry in the terrain are defended to accomplish modernisation, national development, and economic progress. While Wadi is destroyed in the name of oil extraction, Harran is annihilated to promote the construction and operation of oil infrastructures to enhance the living standards of the oil elites.

Yet, the state seems to provide the displaced with a bogus "optimism" among all these distresses and disturbances. The Wadi people whose livelihood had been destroyed by the dislocation were offered jobs at Harran. The men "set off for Harran, that unknown place which only a few had heard of and which none of them have ever visited" (Munif 181) . Harran has transformed into a sanctuary for the refugees. Thus, the townspeople are not surprised when the

caravans arrive with the refugees. The bureaucratic representative of the state, Ibn Rasheed gathers them and proclaims, “Have no fear, my friends, for blessings have come. Almighty God has opened the gates of heaven to you and now…you will rest” (Munif 182).

However, waiting for compensation, the people remain disgruntled. The populace's attitudes were soon amended when Ibn Rasheed distributed their first salary. “No one had dreamed of getting that much money, and none had ever possessed that amount before. They received their pay in silent, solemn, almost majestic rite” (Munif 185). One could witness the nascent 'petro state' budding in the above context.

Saudi Arabia is considered a petro state as the country's revenue is based on oil exports. It also has a weak political system and an oligarchic government. They also suffer from the “resource curse”, which according to Michael Ross, is “more accurately a mineral curse, since these maladies are not caused by other kinds of natural resources, like forests, fresh water, or fertile cropland” (24). According to Ross, the disturbing effect of this ailment can be observed in the Middle East region, which “lags far behind the rest of the world in progress toward democracy, gender equality, and economic reforms” (24). When oil was unearthed in Saudi Arabia, the country was in its embryonic stage.

> During the early days of his rule, Ibn Saud, the founding monarch of Saudi Arabia, could carry the entire national treasury in his camel's saddlebags. After prospectors discovered oil in 1938, Saud's government was flooded with tens of millions—and soon billions—of dollars in oil revenues, which it had little capacity to manage (Ross 248).

Thus the immense oil revenues obtained by the government made it easier for the emirate to silence the dissenting voices. This is represented by Munif, who portrays the vicious manner in which the emir disregards the recalcitrant voices of the citizens. He stubbornly dismisses the judgment of Miteb, the tribal patriarch and pays no regard to worker insurgence.

Since the state was oil-funded, it was not concerned about taxing the citizens. Instead, the state's assets were procured with petroleum money. As a result, the country's rulers were discounted from convincing the citizens about its policies and regulations. “When funded by oil, they become less susceptible to public pressure” (Ross 24). Thus, even when the elders met the emir to inform him about the dreadful situation of the worker's barracks, he seemed to disregard the same, as he knew his independent financial stature as the head of the oil state. This often leads to “The Dutch Disease” which refers to the problems in a resource-blessed nation in congruence with immense resource-export. As Michael Ross points out, such an ailment will lead to a decline of the agricultural and manufacturing sectors.

> This decline is the result of two effects. The first is the “resource movement effect”: as the resource sector booms, it draws labor and capital away from the agricultural and manufacturing sectors and raises their production costs. The second is the “spending effect”: as money from the booming resource sector enters the economy, it raises the real exchange rate. A higher real exchange rate makes it cheaper to import agricultural and manufactured goods than to produce them domestically. (70)

The weakening of the agrarian sector is evident when Wadi is destroyed, and the agrarian culture is nullified. Here, the inhabitants who have until then worked in the soil are forced to migrate and work in the new industrial city of Harran. This is a specific example of the “resource movement effect” as mentioned by Ross. The spending effect is evident among the emir and the oil elites who continuously import petromodern merchandise from the West. In the novel, the emir is intensely fixated with the magical devices of the west, and he is least concerned about establishing their own manufacturing industry. All kinds of service industries, from the roadways, railways and medical practices, are performed by foreigners who arrive in the new metropolitan of Harran in search of prosperity.

Nevertheless, the cities fail to sustain their own citizens. This is reflected in the novel's title. In his interview with Tariq Ali, he explicates the idea of the title. According to him, *Cities of Salt*, “means cities that offer no sustainable existence. When the waters come in, the first waves will dissolve the salt and reduce these great glass cities to dust. In antiquity, as you know, many cities simply disappeared.” He further remarks that the cities are mechanized and therefore “inhuman”. (Ali, “A Patriarch of Arab Literature”)

In, *Cities of Salt,* Abdelrahman Munif represents all characters, the Bedouins, the immigrants and workers as suspended in a petrocapitalist universe of the lost Eden and the evolving metropolitan. Here, all the characters are depicted as having their own role in relation to the novel's central protagonist, “oil”. While many literary critics like Boulatta call attention to the multiple numbers of individuals in the novel who require fictional attention, a close reading proves that the plot is directed and lead by 'oil'. Even the transfer of the

setting from Wadi to Harran, is motivated by the travel of the crude oil resource from the layers of earth to the oil installations for further purification. Thus the novel is centred around oil and the petrotopia envisaged by it.

This significant stature of oil in the fictional space was neglected by writers like John Updike, who described Munif as a "campfire storyteller" who created characters that "rarely fixed in our minds by face" (117). From the imperialist Americans to the working class, each of the characters responds to the existence of this viscious oil resource flowing underneath their physical, political, social, and economic life. Thus, one could undoubtedly pronounce oil as the anti-hero of the narrative. For this rationale, the novel is hailed as the finest petrofiction where oil is visibly invisible. No discussion of petrofiction is comprehensive without alluding to *Cities of Salt.*

The veracity and candour of the historical fiction is ascertained when the oil state of Saudi Arabia which had already expelled Abdelrahman Munif from the country, banned the book. The fiction portrays how oil which is "[p]redominantly imaged as the "free gift" of nature and power, the means to progress and development" creates a "hegemony of oil" which is "sustained by its everyday effectiveness" (Wilson, Petroculture 55). In the novel, Munif portrays the early years of oil discovery and the false reverie of oil utopia promised by the state to its inhabitants. While petromodernity consecrates the emir and the bureaucracy with exuberance and higher status in the power hegemony, the common populace endures the destruction of their land, nature and humanity. Even when the worker's strike portrays an emergence of resistance, the battle against the geopolitical oil conglomerates is hard to win. The state and the capitalist empire seem to be conspiring to maintain such

sacrifice zones in the country, which will feed the perpetrators with the hegemonic power to muffle the defiant voices. Accordingly, the promised utopia is soon transformed into a capitalist-governed petrotopia where oligarchic oil elites reign.

CHAPTER IV

Disenchanted Oil Fairy Tales: Petro-Violence and Social Justice in the Niger Delta

"They may kill all

But the blood will speak

They may gain all

But the soil will rise

We may die

And yet stay alive."

(Nnimmo Bassey, "The Oil Lamp")

On 8 November 1995, nine men who campaigned against the Nigerian federal state and the oil corporations in the country were fraudulently accused of inciting the murder of four pro-government Ogoni chiefs and were sentenced to death by the Nigerian special military tribunal. They were hanged in the make-shift gallows of the Port Harcourt prison two days later. Human rights activists deplored the judgment and execution worldwide, and Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations. The executed nine became the icon of the oil resistance in the Niger Delta, especially for the Ogoni people, and were known as the "Ogoni Nine". The leader of the Ogoni nine was the civil servant turned writer and political activist, Ken Saro Wiwa. The death of Ken Saro Wiwa and the Ogoni eight were prevalently perceived as a necessary political sacrifice that was mandatory for the uncomplicated flow of petro-dollars that enriched the authoritarian state and the manipulative capitalist system.

The execution of Ken Saro Wiwa brought the plight of the Niger Delta and the country to the forefront of discussion. Most of Wiwa's writings were an

open criticism against the oil state, which exploited its citizens with no thought for social or environmental sustainability. In his final official statement published immediately after his death, he challenges the position taken by the state in stifling the sounds of discordance which mattered, "What sort of a country is this that delights in the killing of its illustrious citizens? What have I done that I deserve death, than that I spoke the truth, demanding justice for my poor people of Ogoni?" (qtd in Campell 43). He ends the statement with his belief in the reformation of the oil-rich state and the transformation of the impoverished Nigerian people: "Ogoni, for which I am dying, will one day be emancipated from the shackles of oppression" (qtd in Campell 43).

Nigeria is the largest producer of crude oil and natural gas in Africa. The Nigerian economy is centred on producing and exporting fossil fuel resources. Michael Watts, in his article "Empire of Oil: Capitalist Dispossession and Scramble for Africa", describes Nigeria as an "archetypal "oil nation"' where oil contributed to 80 percentage of state income, 90 percentage of foreign exchange profit, 96 percentage of export proceeds and approximately half of the nation's GDP" (10). The infrastructure of the oil industry in Nigeria is also elaborate with "more than three hundred oil fields, 5,284 wells, 7,000 kilometres of pipelines, ten export terminals, 275 flow stations, ten gas plants, four refineries … and a mass liquefied natural gas (LNG) project" (Watts, Empire of Oil 10).

Nevertheless, Nigeria's economy stayed unstable, and the state functioned appallingly in its per-capita income distribution and poverty management. Xavier Sala-i-Martin and Arvind Subramanian, in analysing this paradox in their paper, "Addressing the Natural Resource Curse: An Illustration from Nigeria", scrutinised the escalating state revenue from fossil fuels over 35 years from 1965

to 2000. While the state revenue showed an increase from US $33 to US $325, there was no increase in per capita GDP, which remained at US $245 all through the years. As Rob Nixon probes, “who could have dreamed in 1958[the year oil was discovered in Nigeria] that four decades and $600 billion of oil revenues later, some 90 million Nigerians would be surviving on less than a dollar a day?” (106).

This is the rationale behind Frederick Freidman's classification of Nigeria as a petrolist state for whom the oil boon has not created progress in the citizens' standard of living. According to Friedman, petrolist states “are both dependent on oil production for the bulk of their exports or gross domestic product and have weak state institutions or outright authoritarian governments” (30).

In Nigeria, the resource curse is detected in the state's political volatility, ecological impairment, economic mismanagement, lesser human development index, etc., which resulted in militant activism and petro-violence. This unconstructive result of the abundance of crude oil resources had led Michael Watts to describe oil wealth as “a cruel joke” (Petro- Insurgency 641). This is manifested comprehensively in the extractive oil site of the Niger Delta.

Seventy-five percentage of Nigeria's fossil fuel export earning is derived from the Niger Delta which is just below eight percentage of Nigeria's landmass. It has an estimated reserve “of about 23 billion barrels of oil and 183 trillion cubic feet of natural gas” (Sonibare 99). Niger Delta is one of the most extensive wetlands globally, a small piece of land of just 70,000 km situated on the Niger River. Niger Delta comprises ecological zones — “sandy, coastal ridge barrier, brackish or saline mangroves, freshwater, permanent and seasonal swamps, and forest and lowland rain forest” (Ifedi 75).

Writers of the region deliberately portray the oilscape in literature to demonstrate their dissent on the resource exploitation in the Niger Delta. In contrast to other sacrifice zones in the thesis, Nigeria is a region where oil is evident in writing. The roots of oil literature run deep in this area, inspired by its vegetation, animal lives, and folk stories in the region. Thus the repertoire of Nigerian petrofiction thrives in contradiction to Amitav Ghosh's claim of slipperiness and muteness of oil in literature (29-30).

For the writers of the Delta, the act of writing itself is resistance, a kind of militancy that could emancipate the land from the profit-devouring petrocapitalists and corrupt leaders. Tanure Ojaide, the Nigerian poet and academic, elucidates on the "artist's activist role" in his article "I Want to Be an Oracle: My Poetry and My Generation":

> Action counts to remedy a bad situation. Being passive or apolitical will not change things. Patience may be a virtue in good times, but not in the desperate era in which Africans are currently living. Conditions unique to the Africa of my day have made me believe strongly that bad conditions do not change unless there is a persistent effort to reverse the current of evil. To accept the corruption as endemic and thus insurmountable is to accept defeat. To accept the military's trampling of justice and freedom without protest or resistance is to accept a cursed life and to shirk one's responsibility. Not to act means hopelessness. I have hope. We are hopeful. However in direct we may have to be in our struggle, we are contributing to a dismantling of oppression and corruption. I have used the image of the struggle which collectively will destroy the oppressor. (17)

This chapter will deal with two novels written in the early twenty-first century – Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* (2011) and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* (2006)- to identify the illusory fairy tales woven on the crude oil resource. Both the novels are soaked in oil in what can be termed as "crude materialism" (LeMenager 13). In contrast to the earlier texts discussed, these texts portray little of the glory of petromodernity. They indulge in the reality of the blood-strewn oil delta where oil violence reigns and enviro-justice is disregarded. The entire crisis mentioned in the texts points to the chronic and accumulated injury endured by the land and people. This injury prevents critics from using the term petromodernity in the context of the Niger Delta. According to Stephanie LeMenager "petromodernity" refers to a "mode of living which is largely aspirational" similar to that in North America and the US (106). When analysing a geographical region like the Delta, the concept of petromodernity is problematic.

Even the narrators in both novels are subjects who had experienced the ordeals of petromodernity. Both Rufus in *Oil and Water* and Zilayefa in *Yellow-Yellow* are subjects of trauma caused by oil accidents. While Rufus had experienced the trauma of living through the livid violence of oil fire, the oil spillage in Zilayefa's ancestral land had made her feel that "like everything had turned to black and was spinning around" (Agary 4). Habila and Agary, in this manner, have consciously chosen the narrators who have witnessed the oil catastrophe to focus on the experience of living with oil. They are ordinary young people encountering the complexities of growing up in an oilscape racked by neo-colonial manipulation, ecological destruction and social mal-development perpetuated by capitalist oil conglomerates and the federal

government. Through them, the writers reveal how people relate to crude oil and explain how man and nature change in the oil-determined anthropocentric space.

Before attempting an analysis of these fictional texts, it is crucial to discern the history of oil in Nigeria, particularly the Niger Delta. This is vital as the Delta region is more imperative than the federal nation in a petro-cultural discourse. Stephanie LeMenager asserts thus: “Regions became more socially and economically significant—in some respects more so than nations—when globalisation assumed its mature form in the late twentieth century” (13).

Oil was discovered in Nigeria only recently compared to other oil excavating arenas. In 1956 the Shell D'Archy discovered oil at Oloibiri in the Eastern part of the Niger Delta after a hectic exploration for more than twenty years. After successfully discovering the first oil well, more foreign oil conglomerates set their eyes on the oil-rich Niger Delta. After the nation's independence in 1960, several of these companies were granted more exploration licenses. Thus Nigeria depended on foreign oil corporations for oil excavation, and the state thrived on the oil shares, tax, and royalty money from the companies. However, the economic benefits of the oil money remained invisible to the common mass. In 1977 a state-owned Petroleum Company, Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC), was established, bringing the oil arena's control into the state's hands, which by then had turned corrupt and unreliable.

The country's unstable economic and political system and the presence of multiple ethnic groups made the situation more precarious. The Delta is home to several ethnic groups namely the Ijaw, the Urhrobo, the Itsekiri, the Isoko, the Ogoni, and the Ilaje. Unequal resource allocation was one of the major reasons for the conflicts among them. Even though the region possesses the crude oil

resources that provide the petro-dollars that run the nation, the region was neglected and faced economic deficit and social backwardness. Environmental effluence and acute pollution worsened the conflict.

Thus the petromodern promise of oil prosperity assured in the region failed miserably. The joint conspiracy of the profit-driven petrocapitalists and the corrupt oil state denied justice to both human beings and the ecosystem of the Delta. These, in turn, led to violent and non-violent resistance from the communities. The study attempts to employ three "energy epistemologies": the historical, the artistic and the political as identified by Imre Szeman in "How to Know about Oil: Energy Epistemologies and Political Futures" to make sense of the petroculture visible in the Delta. While the both the novels provide the artistic lens, the political and historical documents provide the testimonial framework for the study.

Helon Habila's *Oil on Water,* published in 2011, narrates the story of a young, minor-league journalist, Rufus, who enthusiastically accompanies Zaq, the senior reporter whom he considers his mentor following a news report written by the latter. They embark in search of the kidnapped woman, Isabel Floode, the wife of the British oil engineer. The tale is structured as a detective novel with the journalists acting as the investigators. However, as Helon Habila affirms in his interview with Mary Woodbury, the novel is more concerned with the journey than the search. Thus according to the author, the work can be labelled a road novel. He also describes the intention he had in mind while writing the novel: "My aim is to show the reader, through the eyes of Zaq, and especially Rufus, the devastation wreaked upon these communities by the activities of the extractive industries–the polluted rivers, the gas flares, but

especially the violence and insecurity and the sheer injustice of it all." (Woodbury)

Thus, from the tale's inception, the author had focused on oil catastrophe, evading the concept of oil exuberance, the social and economic optimism that customarily accompanied crude oil discovery. As Amy Riddle opines, Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* portrays crude oil itself "as a hostile object, a distorted form of natural wealth, or an expression of nature as such" (56). Nevertheless, the oil desire or petro-love described by Stephanie LeMenegar is manifested in the novel through the recollections and conversations of diverse characters.

Accordingly, Dr. Dagogo Mark, the medical practitioner whom Rufus meets at the Major's camp, describes how the residents of the village hopefully, anticipated the arrival of oil, believing it to be the remedy for their entire discontentment. He recounts how an elder came to him and told him, "I am not ill. I am just poor. Can you give me medicine for that? We want the fire that burns day and night. He told me that plainly, pugnaciously" (Habila 91). Oil money provided an illusion of opulence and well-being for the twenty families who lived in the village.

This particular characteristic of oil is described by Ryszard Kapuscinski, who explains how oil generates "the illusion of a completely changed life, life without work, life for free." Achieving oil wealth is like an archetypal dream which is realised "through lucky accident, through a kiss of fortune and not by sweat, anguish, hard work"(37). He points out how "oil is a fairy tale, and like every fairy tale, a bit of a lie" (37). Consequently, the villagers are blinded by the promise of oil wealth. Their anticipation was not in vain. Crude oil was

eventually found in huge quantities on the edge of the village, on the banks of the river. The exhilaration that followed was ineffable.

> The villagers feasted for weeks. They got their orange fire, planted firmly over the water at the edge of the village. Night and day it burned, and now the villagers had no need for candles or lamps, all they had to do at night was to throw open their doors and windows, and just like that, everything was illuminated. That light soon became the village square. At night men and women would stand facing it, lost in wonder, for hours, simply staring till their eyes watered and their heads grew dizzy… They'd dance, their faces raised to that undying glow, singing their thanks and joy, their voices carrying for miles over the water... it made them very happy. They said it was a sign, the fulfillment of some covenant with God. (Habila 91-92).

The absolute ecstasy that circulated among the villagers was based on the "illusion that oil, and its profits, belong to everyone" (LeMenegar 91). However, soon the villagers were forced to acknowledge that their share of petromodernity was paltry. The discovery of crude oil did not bring much change in their lives except for the night market, which developed around the oil fire and the arrival of the neighbouring villagers who sold them their wares.

Nevertheless, the price they had to pay for the cheap petro-modern yields was immense. As Jennifer Wenzel points out in "Petro-Magic- Realism Revisited", "Petro-magic is one of the forms that petro-violence takes; its illusions of sweet surplus can, for a time, mask the harm that petroleum extraction does to humans and nonhuman nature, turning each into instruments of violence" (214). Toxins start accumulating in the soil and water, killing

livestock and plants. Shortly, people started dying, and their blood samples recorded high levels of chemical toxins.

Thus the promised exuberance was short-lived in the village. This is apparent in the words of Tamuno, the old man who acts as the guide to Zaq and Rufus in their initial voyage through the river who declares that his son, Michael, has no future in the village: “He no get good future here…Nothing. No fish for river, nothing” (36). The boy accompanies Tamuno in the ferry as the schools had shut down. The old man urges the journalists to take the boy to Port Harcourt, the metropolitan town which still holds the key to a decent prospect according to the villagers. They are ready to risk their lives to get access to Port Harcourt. Rufus comprehends the profundity of this desperate hope only by the end of the novel when he witnesses the old man's corpse on the water. He realises that “[t]he old man had served [them] diligently in the hope that we'd take his son to Port Harcourt and a better future” (Habila 159).

Thus, even when their lives are drenched in fake oil promises, Port Harcourt still acts as a space of exuberance and optimism for the villagers. As Rob Nixon opines, “[m]any of the delta's oil minorities, exiled from their subsistence cultures by ruined land, by dead fish waterways, by government attacks and by multiplying uncontrollable militant groups, have gravitated toward the city of Port Harcourt” (126). Accordingly, Port Harcourt, the capital of the oil-rich Niger Delta River States, where two of Nigeria's major refineries are situated, can be considered to be an urban oilscape where exuberance is celebrated.

In his essay “A Short History of Oil Cultures: Or, the Marriage of Catastrophe and Exuberance” Frederick Buell describes the nature of exuberance

in such urban settings. According to him, “the dynamic growth of new industries … has been accompanied by a new, exuberant rhetoric that rejects the notion of stability and equilibrium and that celebrates risk and even imminent catastrophe as part of this new dynamism” (291). In Habila's novel, even though the discussion on Port Harcourt is not comprehensive, one can sense the bringing together of sanctuary and danger, dream and nightmare, exuberance and catastrophe in the metropolitan city of Port Harcourt.

Thus even when Port Harcourt is described as insecure and perilous, the people aspire to reach the city to share their luck. As the old man on the road reveals to Rufus, “Everybody wan go Port Harcourt” (Habila 146). The same sentiment is reflected when Chief Ibrahim hopes, “My people could get some sort of work in Port Harcourt” (Habila 150). The villagers brag about how the oil companies would turn their kids into engineers and find them jobs as oil executives in Port Harcourt (Habila 38). Even the novel's narrator, Rufus, was sent to Port Harcourt as an apprentice photographer by his family “in the hope of picking up something in the big city” (Habila 61). Nevertheless, most of their hopes are mislaid, resulting in more trauma.

> The high hopes that rule the world of youth and drive them toward Port Harcourt after their education are far from sustainable. Not only do they find out that their chances of getting suitable employment are limited, but they also sooner than later realise that their meagre-salaried jobs are not permanent. Because they have to contend with these vicissitudes, the city of Port Harcourt, in the end, turns out to embody urban dystopia. (Olaoluwa 256)

Port Harcourt, in the meantime, altered itself as a petrocapitalist territory where the oil industrialists thrived with the support of fraudulent government officials. Petrocapitalism is reflected in the novel in the form of inadequate oil infrastructure, broken pipes, and carelessly deposited material wastes. For Rufus the presence of the oil industries reminded him of a typical sci-fi film: "the meagre landscape was covered in pipelines flying in all directions, sprouting from the evil-smelling, oil-fecund earth, [t]he pipes criss-crossed and interconnected endlessly all over the eerie field" (Habila 34). According to MacDonald and Barney, these pipelines perform a significant part in rendering oil invisible, "naturalising its presence in our lives and hiding the environmental impacts of extraction far from the eyes of concerned publics" (Wilson 8).

However, the critical feature of petrocapitalism is absent in the novel. The primary feature of oil capitalism, according to George Caffentiz, is the presence of oil as a commercial commodity (105). Oil being a capitalist product depends on profit-making for survival. However, in the novel, the concept of oil as capitalist wealth is deliberately omitted. According to Amy Riddle, this might be due to several reasons. Firstly by ignoring the idea of oil as a commercial resource, the author is trying to bring the reader's focus to the degradation caused by the lubricant in nature. Secondly, Habila can forcefully explicate the "unstoppable sinister force of nature" by portraying oil as part of the "natural landscape" (Riddle 56). Thus instead of representing oil "as wealth in the commodity form, it appears as an exaggerated, caricatured form of natural or material wealth," portraying the annihilation of the Delta as part of a natural cycle (Riddle 57). For this, Habila repeatedly merges the organic and the inorganic imagery concomitantly. Thus he juxtaposes the smell of the human

corpse with the “unmistakable smell of oil” and compares the grass covered by the film of oil to the “liver spots on a smoker's hand” (Habila 9). Consequently, oil appears imperceptible even when it veneers everything in the fiction, “it is strangely invisible in its merging with everything else” (Riddle 57).

Nevertheless, even when oil is absent as a commodity, it determines the social and economic relations in the capitalistic world order. Thus, Habila, in his novel, has given more importance to the conflicts and corruptions prevalent in oil capitalism. Here, oil capitalism refers to oil-based economy. The significant disputes in such an economy include those between the natives and the foreign oil corporation, the state and the citizens, the state and the rebels, etc. As Rutledge rightly points out, these conflicts are triggered by the peculiar feature of oil capitalism, which lays immense importance on land ownership. “The oil company must continuously shift its operations from region to region, country to country, constantly seeking new reserves of oil to replace the ones already depleted” (Aborisade 38). Thus the indigenous people who have for centuries lived in their ancestral homeland are unexpectedly forced to shift for the ‘greater good’ of the nation.

Consequently, the significant hostility detected in the novel is between the landowners and the capitalist tenants. The tension is worsened with the federal government supporting the oil entrepreneurs. Bjorn Beckman, in his article, “Whose state? State and capitalist development in Nigeria”, describes Nigeria “as a neo-colonial, comprador state” that acts as “an organ of international capital” in exploiting and manipulating the people of the neo-extractive sites (40). Here, the comprador state is a nation that acts as a negotiator and agent for foreign capitalists who engage in commercial

investment and trade. In Nigeria, the government and the bureaucrats manoeuvre as arbitrators of oil-imperialism, thus designating the imperial power and its capital forces as the decision makers of the oil state. Thus Beckman argues that Nigeria as an oil state is an appendage of international capitalist force. For the Nigerian federal government, “oil-as-money is the lubricant that keeps the machine of national progress running” (Wenzel 217).

This unethical partnership between the government and the foreign oil corporations is evident in Chief Ibrahim's narration of the skirmishes in the settlement close to Yellow Island, where oil companies constantly visit to gain the land right for excavation. The chief recalls how the oil executives never arrived alone but were accompanied by influential political leaders from Port Harcourt. The oil capitalists and the politicians tried to tempt the chief by promising him money: “money, more money than any of them had ever imagined” (Habila 38). When Chief Malibu declined the offer, the oil capitalists joined hands with the government machinery and arrested him on the false allegation of assisting the militants and contriving against the autocratic regime. The events that followed bear testimony to how the government and the bureaucracy aided the oil company in manipulating the helplessness of the tribe on such occasions.

Firstly, a lawyer arrived, promising the tribe to remove all the charges against Chief Malibu. He laid a condition that demanded the elders adhere to the company's demands to sell the land. Secondly came a politician from Abuja, claiming to be a senator with two white oil executives. When these schemes failed, more people arrived in the village – “all working for the oil companies, trying one way or another to break the villagers' resolve” (Habila 40). Chief

Malibo stayed strong, determined not to sacrifice the ancestral land to the insensitive industrialists. Later, when the villagers met the jailed chief, the jail officials informed them that he was dead, and his body was handed over to them. Even before Chief Malibo's body was buried, the oil companies, with the aid of the state military, arrived to claim the land: “They came with a whole army, waving guns and looking like they meant business” (40).

Another instance of the illegitimate liaison between the capitalists and the government machinery can be discovered in the words of Dr. Mark, who identifies the presence of toxins in the soil and water produced due to oil drilling in the village. He takes drinking water samples, tests it in his laboratory, and detects the rising levels of toxins. He comprehends the need to take action and approaches the oil workers. However, the workers bribed him with money and job and wanted to hush up the whole discovery. As Dr. Mark remembers, **“**The manager, an Italian guy, wrote me a check and said I was now on their payroll. He told me to continue doing what I was doing, but this time I was to come only to him with my results”(92). Dr. Mark continued his investigation and when more people started dying, he collected their blood and documented the toxins in them. This time he sent his findings to the government. “They thanked [him] and dumped the results in some filing cabinet” (92-93).

These events narrated in the fiction should be read along with the stark reality of the natives in the Delta. Nnimmo Bassey, the Nigerian poet, in his conference paper, “Gas Flaring: Assaulting Communities, Jeopardising The World”, presented at the National Environmental Consultation hosted by the Environmental Rights Action states thus:

> Life expectancy in the Niger Delta is markedly lower than what obtains elsewhere in Nigeria. It stands at about 40 years on the average. This is not surprising because of the toxic elements (including benzene) being released regularly into the atmosphere. Diseases related to gas flaring include asthma, bronchitis, cancers, blood disorders and skin diseases. Obviously building a health centre in a village while poisoning the inhabitants is an evil joke of grotesque proportions.(9)

In his recollection, Dr. Mark illustrates how the oil company, the drilling agent, and the government bodies neglect the health and the right to life of ordinary citizens, thereby producing more discordance. The same sentiment is reflected in the words of Rufus, who describes the state of his country to the kidnapped Isabelle Floode: “These people endure the worst conditions of any oil-producing community on the earth, the government knows it but doesn't have the will to stop it, the oil companies know it, but because the government doesn't care, they also don't care” (Habila 138).

When mass protests arise, the government, in collaboration with the oil conglomerates, deploys military forces to stifle the voices of dissent. Again, this is a feature of pertocapitalism that often operates in a “war-like scenario” (Rutledge 4). Initially, the police force was employed by the oil companies for the protection of their property. The Police Amendment Act of 1965 published in the Nigerian Gazette, permits the inspector-general of police to employ “supernumerary police” on the application of “any person ... who desires to avail himself of the services of one or more police officers for the protection of property owned or controlled by him” (2). Thus the oil companies appointed these 'spy police' at their installations. The police officers were appointed and

trained by the state police force. However, they were “paid for by the oil companies, at rates well above those paid by the Nigerian government” (Manby 104).

This illicit partnership of the police force with the government and the capitalists is comprehended by the seasoned journalist, Zaq. This is evident in his conversation with Rufus. When Rufus wonders aloud why the militants had never bombed the pipelines which are easily accessible for sabotage, Zaq provides him with two possibilities: “-Because the oil companies pay them not to do so.- Or perhaps the oil companies pay the soldiers to keep the militants away” (Habila 34-35).

Along with the precautionary police force maintained by the oil companies, the government had established a special security force as well to safeguard oil installations. One such task force was the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force, which was later condemned by the international community for its viciousness during the Ogoni-Nine arrest.

The military's unethical and unempathetic mode of operation is detailed in the bulletin published by *The Rainforest Movement* on July 30, 2011. The news detailed the rupture of ExxonMobil Pipeline in the State of Akwa Ibom led to continuous leakage of crude oil into the water and soil of the region for seven days before it was finally stopped. Nevertheless, when the local people staged a demonstration against the company, the security guards attacked them and arrested them without mercy.

Habila, in his fiction, presents the oil conflicts with great honesty and problematises the military's brutality and rancorousness through the Major's character. The Major who professes to save the Delta from the hands of the

aggressive militant force is himself a product of unhealed trauma. The tribulations he had undergone and the rape of his daughter had psychologically affected the Major to such an extent that he was found unfit by the army to continue in service and was subsequently court-martialled. Paradoxically he was appointed in the Delta as part of his punishment. According to Mark, “He's still angry, volatile, unpredictable, and one day he's going to light the match” (Habila 57). Ironically, the government placed a volatile and unpredictable man to supervise the precarious Delta region.

Most of the soldiers in the camp are also filled with the same viciousness. When the Major drenches his prisoners in petrol from a rusty iron water can, the soldiers point guns threateningly at them. At this point, the soldiers' eyes are filled with both “excitement and expectation” (Habila 55). Rufus enquires to Mark what the exhilaration is all about, and the Doctor who had for the past three years witnessed this malicious ritual answers that the soldiers are eagerly waiting for the day “when the Major will strike a match and throw it at the bowed, petrol-soaked heads” (Habila 55).

Thus the armed force men are represented as arrogant and power-corrupt men who do not believe in any form of kindness. Accordingly, the Major says. “I'm the one who can handle them, the only one. They understand only one language: force” (Habila 97). He believes that human rights and justice are just fancy romantic notions: “There are no human rights for people like them… The best thing is to line them up and shoot them” (Habila 97).

The negligence of the government machinery in inculcating the progressive principles of the real world is evident here. In the real and fictional world, the government overlooks the real crisis in the area, treating the region as

a necessary sacrifice zone essential for the existence of the oil nation. The authoritative military regimes of General Ibrahim Babangida, as well as that of General Sani Abacha neglected the community. For the dictatorial government and the oil companies, the Niger Delta is one among the "disposable peripheries [which is] harnessed to feed a glittering center" (Klein 155).

Astoundingly, even the enormous amount of environmental disaster happening in the Niger Delta, the third-largest wetland globally, is dealt with by the national state communities in a placid manner. Even the international community remains silent in the context of Nigeria. This has been mentioned in the Human Rights Watch Report of May 2011. The report clearly states how the petropolitics of the time and the status of Nigeria as a "leading oil exporter" prevented the foreign governments, including US and UK, from publicly criticising Nigeria's human rights record (153).

Rob Nixon in his work, *Environmentalism of the Poor*, argues that the racial bigotry of the multinational oil firms is the primary reason for this negligence. He exemplifies it by describing the actuality of slapdash oil spillages in Nigeria.

> Shell's racism is manifest: in Africa, the company waives onshore drilling standards that it routinely upholds elsewhere. Indeed, 40 percent of all Shell oil spills worldwide have occurred in Nigeria. When operating in the Northern hemisphere—in the Shetlands, for instance—Shell pays lucrative rents to local councils; in the Niger Delta, village authorities receive no comparable compensation. (113)

Thus the Niger Delta can be considered as an absolute case of a sacrifice zone generated by neocolonial extractivism. Neocolonial extractivism in turn is

promoted by the principles of conquest and fostered by a “particular brand of irresponsibility” (Klein 155). The environmental policies that regulate the undertakings of the Euro- American oil companies in their homeland are absent in racially 'inferior' Africa. Thus, in practice and policy, “environmental racism” reigns in the Delta.

In the sacrifice zone emerges the dissenters whose traits, as Zaq explicates in the title of his editorial, are ambiguous. The answer to whether they are 'Gangsters or Freedom Fighters?' is ambiguous (Habila 28). The early representations of the militants in the novel present them as rebels in an endless war with the federal patrols. They vandalised the oil pipelines and “constantly threatened to blow up” the oil rigs and refineries. (Habila 7). Those who joined the militants were young men disillusioned by the promise of oil wealth. They comprehend the fact that “the country [is] so corrupt, only a few had access to wealth” (Habila 107). So they indulge in activities like kidnapping the expatriate workers, threatening and vandalising the oil paraphernalia, etc., as a mode of protest against the federal government and the oil capitalists. Byron Caminero-Santangelo, in his “Petro-Violence and the Act of Bearing Witness in Contemporary Nigerian Literature”, explicates,

> [The] socio-ecological devastation and state- and industry-sponsored terror have fueled “a gigantic reservoir of anger and dissent,” a sense of frustrated hopelessness, and a belief that non-violent protest is fruitless. The result has been an escalation of armed violence: rebel groups have proliferated and turned their focus on kidnapping oil workers and sabotaging installations; criminal gangs and ethnic militias fight for control of the oil-bunkering trade and protection money from oil

> companies; and the Nigerian military, despite the return to democratic rule in 2000, continues to terrorise the Delta (often defending the interests of the oil industry). (363)

Rufus, in the novel, takes a stance that supports the militants, “I don't blame them for wanting to vandalise the pipelines that have brought nothing but suffering to their lives, leaking into the rivers and wells, killing the fish and poisoning the farmlands” (Habila 107-108). Here Rufus is challenging the petro-development discourse of the capitalist powers echoed by James Floode, who claims that Nigeria could quickly become “the Japan of Africa, the USA of Africa, but the corruption is incredible” (107). Here, the expatriate oil engineer cannot identify with the trauma of the dispossessed in the oil sacrifice zone. This lack of perceptiveness is due to the distinct ways globally secured and insecure people comprehend the oil infrastructure. For the secured populace, pipelines offer “‘secure' storage, “assured” directional flow, and “safe” onward movement of oil and fossil-based modes of living in general amid ever-renewed rounds of privatisation and financialisation that ensure the reproduction of the world petro-economy” (MacDonald, Containing Oil, 50). On the other hand, exploited human beings witness “the toxic social relations and carbonising effects of oil” in the pipelines (MacDonald, Containing Oil, 50).

The toxicity of the carbonised fluid generates the trauma of being homeless in one's homeland, leading to insurgence in the valley. Most of the militants either belonged to the villages where oil extraction was held or were themselves oil workers. For instance, the Professor, the leader of the militants, was reported to have been employed in the oil industry, but soon he was disenchanted by the ecological degradation around him. Therefore “he became a

militant to fight for change" (Habila 96). However, the Major challenged this popular idealist discourse. He disputes the claim: "they call themselves freedom fighters, but they are rebels, terrorists, kidnappers" (Habila 96). Thus according to him, the militants are also part of the corrupt system that complicates the life of the villagers.

Yet, one of the militants whom Rufus meets in prison proclaims himself to represent the distraught Delta people. "We are the people, we are the Delta, we represent the very earth on which we stand" (Habila 149). However, Habila, through his narrative, subverts this discourse portraying the Professor and his group of people as manipulators of trauma in the valley. Ironically, the militants also rely on oil wealth for a "steady livelihood" by threats and kidnapping (Habila 7). They manipulate the corrupt system and "dream of becoming instant millionaires" (Habila 98). They "instrumentalise and objectify "the people" they claim to represent, and contribute to the ecological devastation of "the land"" (Caminero-Santangelo 373).

Karibi describes the plight of the villagers who face petro-violence thus: "Communities like this had borne the brunt of the oil wars, caught between the militants and the military, and the only way they could avoid being crushed out of existence was to pretend to be deaf and dumb and blind" (Habila 33). Thus, the militants act as destructive agents who lead the Delta's inhabitants into pain and despair. Yet this viewpoint is not acceptable as the world is passing through a time where "environmental activists are increasingly constructed as environmental terrorists, both through counterterrorism units and associated mainstream discourses" (Wilson, "Gendering Oil" 245).

In the case of the Niger Delta, the spectacular violence that causes bloodshed and destruction is followed by the slow violence that acts upon both the environment and the people. The oil exploration, excavation, and distribution of crude oil have calamitous impacts on the physical environment. Thus Rufus, who commences on his journey through the Delta, witnesses uninhabitable villages near the oil wells: “as if a deadly epidemic had swept through it” (Habila 8). The ecologically sensitive mangrove swamp has “turned foul and sulphurous”, and their dangling roots “grew out of the water like proboscis gasping for air” (Habila 9). The whole ecosystem is drenched in deadly oil, killing the living beings around them, “we saw dead birds draped over tree branches, their outstretched wings black and slick with oil; dead fishes bobbed white-bellied between tree roots” (Habila 9). Even the grass around the region “was suffocated by a film of oil, each blade covered with blotches like the liver spots on a smoker's hands” (Habila 9).

The extent of the oil-induced pollution in the Delta can be inferred from the study conducted by J. P. Afam Ifedi and J. Ndumbe Anyu in the article titled “Blood Oil, Ethnicity, and Conflict in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria”:

> Over the past fifty years, more than 1.5 million tons of oil have been spilled in the delta region, some fifty times the pollution unleashed in the Exxon Valdez tanker disaster in Alaska in 1989. These spills have caused serious damage to the ecology of the Niger Delta. Pollution threatens rare species of fish, turtles, and birds; it is destroying the livelihood of many of the 20 million people living in the region and damaging crops, and fuelling an upsurge in violence. The oil companies have disturbed a fragile ecosystem that supported fishing and farming. Engineers and

> project managers constructing a network of pipelines through a mangrove swamp, or laying roads through marshland, have disrupted spawning grounds, changed the course of streams, and threatened village livelihood. The extent of damage from oil spillage in the Niger Delta's ecosystem in the past fifty years has been catastrophic to flora and fauna. (78)

Nevertheless, the ecological damage of the Delta does not alarm the federal government. The natives suffered while the nation thrived on oil money. Their land, water, and livelihoods were destroyed. Chief Ibrahim describes, "Their rivers were already polluted and useless for fishing, and the land grew only gas flares and pipelines" (Habila 39). Common species, including fish, their staple food, began to disappear. Several discussions and exchanges mentioning this are hinted at throughout the text. The young girl in the village tells Rufus about the disappearance of crabs that used to be sold by Rufus during his childhood as a means to pay his school fees. "No crabs here now. The water is not good" (Habila 26). In another context Nurse Gloria informs Rufus about the departure of bats from the island of Irikefe.

- These islands used to be a big habitat for bats; now only a few dozen remains here and there
- Why?
- She wordlessly turned and pointed at the faraway sky, towards the oil fields. – Gas flares. They kill them. Not only the bats, other flying creatures as well (Habila 129).

This conversation shows how the animals are displaced from their familiar ecosystem and are forced to migrate to other living spaces.

Human beings are also forcefully displaced. The forms of oil-induced displacement represented in Habila's *Oil and Water* are of different types. Firstly there is the aggressive and spectacular displacement of the tribal villagers from the regions where oil wells are dug, and crude oil exploration happens. This can be witnessed in the casting out of Chief Malabo's tribal hamlet with the discovery of oil. “We left, we headed northwards, we've lived in five different places now, but always we've had to move. We are looking for a place where we can live in peace. But it is hard…how can we be happy when we are mere wanderers without a home?” (Habila 41). This kind of displacement also includes the forced embargo of the natives who live in and around the oil pipelines and oil installations to prevent sabotage and theft. Even though this form of displacement is primarily motivated and encouraged by the federal government, the compensation amount paid is deficient, and the resettlement plans are defective.

The second kind of displacement includes forced exile, where the native villagers are forced to move from their familiar locale owing to different forms of violence, which destroy their livelihood and serenity. Thus in the novel, the Major is seen as informing the journalists about the exile of the villagers threatened by the rebel force. “They used to be well populated, you know, thriving. Now the people have all packed their things and left because of the violence” (Habila 96). Here the villagers are displaced from their land by the petro-violence and ideological power exerted equally by the capitalist forces and the militants. Natives are rendered oil refugees with no feasible mode of sustenance.

Alternatively, sometimes the villagers are forced to continue in the village while the place itself is transformed into an oil-engineered zombie space permeated with

> the gas flares, the stumps of pipes from exhausted wells with their heads capped and left jutting out of the oil-scorched earth, and the ever-present pipelines, criss-crossing the landscape…the carcasses of the fish and crabs and water birds that floated on the deserted beaches. (Habila 175)

These oil pipelines operate both as a "visible metaphor and an invisible infrastructural element supporting contemporary petroculture" (Wilson 23), which through constant leakages, transforms the ancestral land into "a place for dying" (Habila 90). As Dr. Mark reports, "A man suddenly comes down with a mild headache, becomes feverish, then develops rashes, and suddenly a vital organ shuts down. And those whom the disease doesn't kill, the violence does" (Habila 93).

Thus even when they remain in their familiar space, the space undergoes such a drastic change that it becomes toxic and uninhabitable. Their livelihood is lost, and their soil is poisoned. This leads to what Rob Nixon terms as "displacement without moving", thereby creating a "community of refugees in place" (Nixon 19).

Accordingly, oil exploration and export bestowed the Delta people various miseries. Helon Habila has successfully represented all of these in different degrees in his work. He, through the characters, brings attention to the neo-colonial capitalistic ideologies that have led to the foundation of Nigeria as a federal nation-state. For the state's sustenance, Nigeria requires regions like the Niger Delta where the exploitation of natural resources is rooted in racial and

ethnic bigotry, thus creating “socio-cultural paradigms where some lives matter more than others” (Wilson, *On Petrocultures* 11).

The next book for analysis in the context of the Niger Delta is Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* which was published in 2006, a few years before the publication of Habila's *Oil and Water*. According to Sunny Awhefeada, it is “the first novel written by a female about the Niger Delta situation” (97). Both novels represent the Niger Delta as a sacrifice zone prompted by the racial prejudice innate in the globalised capitalist discourses. However, in variance with Habila's novel, Agary concentrates on gender politics in the oil-drenched socio-cultural space of the Delta.

As Awhefeada rightly points out, the novel has a bifocal approach. Firstly, the Delta region, “in all its pristine endowment and Edenic bliss,” is depicted as exploited and degraded “by foreigners aided by local conquistadors”. Secondly, the novel represents “the violation of women in the region by foreign oil workers, and also by the indigenous bourgeoisie” (97-98). The text also gives much attention to the oil metropolis of Port Harcourt and the petro-modern lifestyle in the township, replete with corruption and exploitation.

Port Harcourt is the energy capital of Nigeria that carries the optimism of oil prosperity in *Yellow-Yellow.* Continuing the tradition of the oil fairy tales, the characters in the novel are spellbound by the promises held in the oil city and walk through the road of progress to secure their dreams. Accordingly, Zilayefa's mother, Bibi moves to Port Harcourt from her rural hamlet, mesmerised by the reverie of exuberance the place held. It was the time when Nigeria was the hub of oil money and there were several businessmen, especially around Port Harcourt. She wanted to become a secretary to one of them, but fate had other

plans for her. Like the country whose oil desire transformed into oil trauma, Bibi is scandalised by her misplaced dream, leading to the disenchantment of her desires. With a weakened spirit, Bibi returns to the village to inherit a small piece of her ancestral land, where she depends on farming and fishing for a living. Later this is also destroyed by the 'black-gold' she trusted in.

Thus like every petrolist nation, Nigeria had also grown prey to “pseudo-development” and fake employment promises. This “pseudo-development” is a typical feature of all oil-nations which, according to Nawal El Saadawi is a

> a dual system composed of a small modern sector linked to the interests of multinationals and a large traditional agricultural sector producing for export, a population where a restricted minority shares in some of the gains while the vast majority sink from poverty to ever deeper destitution, a ruling class fed on opulence and wealth and the masses fed on deprivation and a loaf of bread or a bowl of rice. (44)

Port Harcourt is also founded on this modern developmental ideology of progress which “is visualised as a process of cultural change, of modernisation along the lines of Western life, of technological advance which would permit better utilisation of the resources, quicker and bigger profits” (Saadawi 44). At the same time, the villages in the periphery are left to social and economic mal-development.

This is why Bibi's lesson on the illusion of oil does not dispose of her belief in the opulence assured by the oil capital. While the township possessed the bundle of illusion, the village encompassed the stark reality of poverty and deprivation. This reality motivates her to unconsciously transfer the same dream of metropolitan sumptuousness to her daughter, who devices a “master escape

plan" that could save herself from the "claustrophobic village" (Agary 17). She had options open before her, yet in her opinion, "the only option [she] was unwilling to consider was to remain in [her] village" (Agary 39). She initiates a relationship with Sergio as a strategy that guarantees liberation from the village. She confesses to herself that "[L]ove was not my desire…I simply wanted a way out of the village, and if love came with escape, it would be a bonus" (Agary 23). In her conversation with her mother, she expresses her confidence in the city: "Port Harcourt would give me a better chance of getting my little piece of the national cake" (Agary 43). Finally, when she arrives at the metropolis, Zilayefa contemplates, "Who was I? Nothing more than a poor girl from the village, hoping that a good wind had blown me in this direction to better my future" (Agary 52). She is even ready to work as a prostitute in the city," and sell [her] body to the whitey" (Agary 35).

She had witnessed the success of such girls from her town who returned back transformed into "robust, good-looking people"(Agary 36). They took care of their families with the flesh money they earned in the city. Their arrival in the village was celebrated with great "euphoria" inspiring more girls "to follow in their path and taste the life they were living" (Agary 36-37). However, in the close circle, the girls reveal the "rules of the cutthroat game of survival they played" in the city of oil fortune and the sexual violence they are subject to. "Our visitors told of times when they fell into the hands of a crazy whitey who beat them up or pushed objects like bottles into their privates as part of "fun"' (Agary 37).

Even though the listeners "clutched their chests in fear", the terror did not prevent them from picturing "themselves in the same life, blurring out all the

minuses in their little mind" (Agary 38). The desire for oil affluence seems to obliterate all the discourses of trauma narrated. This demonstrates how the reverie of oil prosperity hides the economic, political, and social snags in the metropolis.

Even when the young women recognise the exploitation and point out how the prosperity rightfully belonged to them, they are forced to be voiceless in the city. Only in their rural hamlets could they register their dissent against the petite money disrespectfully strewn on them, "And na our oil money! Na our oil money!" (Agary 38). However, this did not prevent the natives from following the mirage of foreign oil corporations. For them, the capitalists in the metropolis "held the pot of gold for all graduates" (Agary 32). According to them, "the oil companies could find a place for every degree- lawyers, administrators, geographers, and engineers were required; all other disciplines fed the nontechnical units, including community relations" (Agary 33). Yet, most of the time, the locals ended up as *sykrawkraw*s doing low-level jobs in the oil company (Agary 37).

Even energy seems to reign in excess in the metropolis. Zilayefa reaches her mentor's house in Port Harcourt and is astounded to witness the magic of 'energy' in one's fingertip. She discerns the difference between the energy setting in her village and the metropolis.

> Where I came from, it was not so simple. You need energy from your mouth and your arms if you were using firewood; if you were using kerosene stove (usually old, rusty and leaky), you need special techniques to make the stove work. Either way, there was a great deal of mental and physical exertion involved. But here, Esther merely plugged in her kettle

> and moved around the kitchen, clearing away her pots, arranging this and that, and in less time than it would take me to get a fire going with good dry firewood, the kettle was whistling, spitting out steam and ready to pour out boiling water. (Agary 62)

"Securing Development And Peace in the Niger Delta: A Social And Conflict Analysis For Change", published by the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, establishes the same. According to the report, firewood is still the primary source of energy for seventy-three per cent of the population. Only thirty-four percent of the population can access electric power when available (Francis 10). The same is pointed out in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on Nigeria, which states how seventy per cent of the masses "still live in a rural subsistence characterised by a total absence of such basic facilities as electricity, pipe-borne water, hospitals, proper housing, and roads, are weighed down by debilitating poverty, malnutrition and diseases"(6).

Accordingly, the veracity of the energy paradox is observable in rural hamlets. Agary, through the narrator, informs the reader about how the village generator stopped working as "there was always conflict about where the funds for diesel would come from" (Agary 22). This is indeed ironic for a region with 34 billion barrels of oil reserves with an estimated reserve life of 41 years. Thus while "people like Amananaowei, the local government chairman, and other wealthy people such as the Semokes could afford a household generator", the ordinary villagers are left in the dark with unkept promises "(Agary 22). Thus the federal and the local government along with the oil corporations and oil elites, seem to incite the tranquil villagers to hostility.

The situation in the cities was identical. The petrol shortage was widespread in Port Harcourt and Lagos. “Long queues at petrol stations were a common sight” (Agary 110). The irony of the petrol shortage in a country that exported crude oil was widely commented on. “How could a country that housed four refineries be exporting petrol when its residents were suffering without petrol? “(Agary 111). The Minister of Petroleum was from Niger Delta, and he was blamed for being “sitting and feeding fat at the same table as the devils of the government and oil companies and forgetting the starvation of his own home” (Agary 111).

For the young, suffering amidst plenty seems unjust and unfair. They soon grouped “to kidnap oil company executives or bar oil company works from their work” (Agary 9-10). In another instance, “Some boys were suspected to have stolen and sold the transformer for the village generator” (Agary 22). Agary describes how “Every young boy had visions of dying valiantly for the cause, as Ken Saro-Wiwa just had as Issac Adaka Boro had done nearly thirty years before him”, and rambled around the village yelling out the final words of Wiwa, “Alua Continua” at any minor hassle (Agary 34). Violence thus is manifested as spectacular in both the rural and the urban oilscape.

> There was fighting between neighbours, between friends, and between communities. Things were such that, with frustration weighing heavily on everyone, even those who prided themselves on being easygoing and having no enemies were dragged into miniwars. Everyone who could afford it had their little army they could call on to fight their wars… And the young boys who made up these armies were so caught up in the anarchy that they lost all sense of decency and respect. (Agary 106)

The participation of the young people and their remonstration for the restitution of their rights and self-esteem sometimes end up as mere criminal activities, creating more socio-economic problems in Nigeria's Niger Delta. “The so-called youth groups had become well-oiled extortion machines all in the name of the struggle. They stole, blackmailed, and vandalised for the progress and development of the Ijaw Nation, the Niger Delta”(Agary 158).

In the meantime, the oil companies attempted to allay the antagonism of the masses by announcing various social development policies whose presence is uncertain. Thus the foreign oil conglomerates often attempted to please the social expectations promised by the fossil fuels through their public relations agenda. Consequently, the oil companies announced educational scholarships for the natives of the impoverished Niger Delta without furnishing the precise means to apply for them.

> The problem was that we never got more information after the announcement. Nobody told us where we could go to apply for them. Nobody told us what exactly we needed to qualify for one. Somewhere out, there were marvellous scholarships from the oil companies, but they were useless to us because no one in my village knew how to get them. (Agary 11)

Similar to the neo-colonial promise of crude oil wealth, the scholarships also remained worthless for the indigenes.

The federal government furthers these deceitful practices on the ingenious villagers. This is reflected in Zilayefa's hope of utilising government programmes to gain better prospects in Port Harcourt.

> I imagined that I could learn a skills-acquisition programmes organised by the government agency set up to address the development needs of the Niger Delta. None of the programmes had reached my village since the agency was formed, but I was sure that being in Port Harcourt would give me a better chance (Agary 43).

However, none of the policies designed by the company or the government could curb the remonstrations that emerged from the Delta. Like Zilayefa, the villagers too believed that "everything was the oil companies' fault" (Agary 138). The government in the meantime "had a heavy hand of justice. .. No one saw the need of us to die like flies if our deaths were to be in vain" (Agary 138). Occasionally, the oil companies aided by the government forces "flexed their muscles", violating the rights of the vulnerable villagers (Agary 158). The oil companies used the "Nigerian armed forces as their private security to terrorise and sometimes kill innocent villagers who questioned the inequity of their situation- living in squalor while barrels of oil pumped out of the land provided the luxury that surrounded the oil workers and the elite of Nigeria" (Agary 158).

Meanwhile, the other local young men who still believed in the illusions of oil money at Port Harcourt continued migrating. Local boys acted as pimps in the prostitution business, and sometimes a brother killed another brother in conflicts related to sharing returns (Agary 38). According to C. Poroma, "[t]he alarming rise of the rate of prostitution in the Nigerian society is a reflection of perennial poverty, itself a direct consequence of the nature, dynamics, and functioning of capitalism" (124). The business of prostitution flourished as robust young people are refused the possibility to partake in their state's

economy productively. Consequently, they locate themselves in the flesh business as a "survival strategy". Poroma further opines how," [t]his lack of opportunity can be located within the context of petroleum dictated capitalist economy, its contradictions that generate and reinforce inequality and poverty" (124).

Consequently, just like the crude oil in the Delta, the petro-capitalist culture transformed the human body and sexuality into a commodity that could be manipulated. "The age of oil is rife with ironies that have resulted in both feminist advances as well as the reinforcement of long-standing patriarchal conceptualisations of woman as object and as property" (Wilson, Gendering 248). For a comprehensive understanding of this capitalist commodification and dehumanisation of women, it is imperative on the part of the researcher to employ "a feminist lens to "follow the oil" and trace "the webs of relations and cultural meanings through which oil is imagined as a 'vital' and 'strategic' resource."" (Wilson, Gendering 244). The female gender identity of the protagonist also obligates the investigator to analyse the petro-sexual politics in the Delta.

As part of their survival strategy, young women utilised their bodies to serve both the national and international employees of the multinational oil companies to earn their scrap of oil money. "The whiteys were always the catch of the day… The Filipinos and the *chinkos* did not give as much money, but they brought many gifts, and they were definitely better than the *sykrawkraws*...Girls did anything to get a whitey" (Agary 37). In their trade they underwent "unimaginable horrors to get through before the "clients" released the money" (Agary 37-38).

Even when undergoing all kinds of manipulation, these successful women act as rural trendsetters. As Bryk describes, “the visit of the prostitute to the village is a big event. She brings bread, tea, sugar, and other foreign goods and items. She is the favourite of everybody and is quite popular. She was seen as a civilised person; exhibiting the ways of the whites.” A similar instance is described in Agary's novel where the narrator describes how people run ahead to announce the arrival of these women once they are spotted in the riverbank, “by the time the visitor reached the family house, a sizeable group would have gathered around to welcome them (Agary 36).

However, gender politics survived in the business of prostitution in both observable and subtle manner. While the women were emotionally and sexually tortured by the 'whiteys', the local men wanted the young girls to comprehend that “they still had power in town”. Therefore they “would attack the shacks where the girls lived, beat them up, steal their money” (Agary 38). Thus what the reader witnesses in the lives of the women in the novel are capitalised petro-sexual politics.

In the case of Niger Delta, the petro-gender discourse is gaining relevance with “the growing awareness of the deeper impact of the oil economy on the women who constitute a large proportion of subsistence farmers, fisher-women and the informal sector in the region” (Iklegebe 241-242). The earlier analysis portrays women as victims and explicates how sexual exploitation and violence affect young women in their entry into the flesh business. *Yellow-Yellow* represents “the sexualisation of the female body and the exploitation of the environment [for oil extraction] form a nexus that anchors the novel's framework as a deconstruction of the patriarchal establishment” on which

capitalist ideology is rooted (Egya 118). In the fiction, both oil and woman act as objects to satisfy the foreigners' lust.

The foreigners, in turn are the agencies of hope. But they manipulate the ecology and the female body. Thus both Bibi and Zilayefa rely on the Greek sailor, Plato Papadopoulos and the Spanish antique-furniture dealer, Sergio, respectively, only to be disappointed. Just like the oil industry, which manipulates the environment with false promises bequeathing the tragedy of petro-modernity to aspire for, the Greek sailor also takes advantage of Bibi to satisfy his sexual needs, “leaving behind his planted seed,” which fills her with “dreams” of future. (Agary 7-8). According to Ashaolu, the event is symbolic.

> It adumbrates the intersections between patriarchal capitalist rape of African women and the ecological domination of her rivers emblematic of the sailor’s ship. This Greek sailing on African rivers to dock on its shores evinces the colonisers’ domination of Africa’s waters ways. Beyond that, his entry into the Niger Delta via cruising and sailing on the river and his docking on the shore is another way of neocolonialist's “penetration” of African land. First, the Greek’s ship encroachment into African waters represents his phallus piercing into African’s body to complete an ecological desecration of her nature/water and the rape of her Motherland seen in Bibi – the woman. (46)

Bibi thus falls prey to the aspired exuberance, which proved to be misplaced, like the discovery of crude oil in the Niger Delta. The injuries generated in Bibi's life continue when the patriarchal capitalist oil corporation acts as the agent of destruction, staining her life and land with “viscous oil that would not dry out, black oil that was knee-deep” (Agary 4). Zilayefa witnessed

the event and watched “the thick liquid spread out, covering more land and drowning small animals in its path” (Agary 4). As a narrator, she informs the reader that her “mother lost her main source of sustenance” which points the Delta's tacit violence, leaving the indigenes deprived. Thus as Ignatious Chukwumah opines, “the oil company as a core male-image pulsates in the background of *Yellow-Yellow”* (50).

Similarly, Sergio, the Spanish businessman who had arrived “to conduct some business” in the village, considers Zilayefa an object of desire (Agary 22). She believes in him and takes him to her “special hideaway” revealing her secrets which echoes the discovery of crude oil in deep forests (Agary 28). Being an antique furniture dealer, he was “interested in logging timber from the forests” in the village (Agary 22). Thus, both environment and women are commodities to be penetrated and conquered. The consistent manner in which the female body tempts foreigners can be connected with the incessant enticement of foreign oil companies toward the never-depleting crude oil in the Niger Delta. Consequently, “while the land writhes in despoliation, the violation of the women, which often results in unwanted pregnancy, amputates their ambitions, aborts their dreams, and confines them to the abyss of impov-erishment” (Awhefeada 98).

Accordingly, the female body and the land act as a dumping spot for the unwanted “seeds” and spilt oil wastes. The locale oil elites aid this violation by the foreign oil conglomerates. This is perceived by Bibi, who doesn't go with the community “marching to see Amananaowei, the head of the village” (Agary 4). Here Bibi displays her lack of confidence in the patriarchal community head, who is later found to have “received monetary compensation, meant for the

village, from the oil company"(Agary 40) and thereby partnered in the petro-violence that obliterates both nature and community. Thus without the support of a patriarch, Bibi flourished. Even though "[the] black oil that spilled that day swallowed" Bibi's hope and loosened the "threads that held together her fantasies" for her daughter, she connived with nature "with unwavering determination" to bring up a successful woman in Zilayefa (Agary 8).

Nevertheless, Zilayefa continues to believe in the power of patriarchy and the assurance of the oil money and keeps a constant search of a father figure. This subconscious desire is evident when she first meets Sergio for the first time. She wonders "if he was Greek", like her father (Agary 19). She did not have a chance to know her father. As she voices, "My mother hardly spoke about him. I had learned not to ask questions, because each time I did, she very tactfully dodged them, changed the subject" (Agary 19). Every time she suppresses her desire, it resurfaces in different forms. Later she narrates how her chance meeting with Sergio brings thoughts about her father: "my craving for information about Plato resurfaced. My mother's total devotion to me had succeeded only in suppressing, not erasing, my desire to know about my other half" (Agary 108). This fixation can be compared to the obsession of the ordinary men in Nigeria who believe that oil is their ticket to triumph. Even when tales of failure reach them and even after the trauma of oil makes their "head hurt" and stomach turn (Agary 4), the oil fantasy still governs their lives.

This same fixation on the father figure makes her vulnerable in her encounter with the retired Naval Officer, Admiral Al Kenneth Alaowei Amalayefa, a sexagenerian who represents the male petrocapitalist world. In all its exploitation, Zilayefa flourishes financially in Port Harcourt with the money

arranged by the Admiral. This is analogous to the Nigerian federal state, which existed from the oil rents and taxes collected from multinational oil corporations. Thus, “the multinational oil company and Admiral are elements that bear the same male-image where interfaces of correspondences, complementarity, and opposition are obvious” (Letterkunde 51). As Zilayefa states, “Inside me was my personal turmoil over Plato and outside was the turmoil of a nation” (Agary 109).

The violation of the woman's body in the novel can be compared to the violation of the environment in the Niger Delta. The oil spillage in the streams that created “streaks of blue, purple and red” pollutes the woman's body and her livelihood (Agary 39). As Zilayefa points out, the crude oil had claimed: “the occupations that had sustained my mother, her mother and her mother's mother”, and the women were forced to drive themselves farther to find “land for farming” (Agary 39). The gender roles were also reasserted forcefully:

> The men were even more oppressive than the women alive could remember. They demanded a healthy meal when they were hungry, disregarding that the women had to walk extra kilometres to get firewood or cultivate and harvest the food now fertilised by their sweat and blood… The men claimed that according to the tradition, it was their exclusive right to make all the decisions inside and outside the home…Some women walked around deaf in one year because they had dared to question their husband's wisdom in spending the last kobo in the house on booze. (Agary 40)

The reader can witness Nixon's “slow violence” manifested here. Even though the loss of livelihood and the tensions among the genders in the

household were fundamentally caused by petromodernity, both the victims and the assailants are entirely unaware of the fact. The violence perpetuated is slow-paced and invisible, and the causes and effects of the brutality are decoupled as time elapses. Thus, even Zilayefa, who is accustomed to "the tensions and conflicts in the village borne out of frustration, " cannot accuse the cursed black gold as the felon who creates discordance(Agary 27).

Indeed recognising and representing the curse of perto-magic is strenuous and challenging. Rob Nixon describes this complexity thus:

> In an age when the media venerate the spectacular when public policy is shaped primarily around perceived immediate need, a central question is strategic and representational: how can we convert into image and narrative the disasters that are slow-moving and long in the making, disasters that are anonymous and that star nobody, disasters that are attritional and of indifferent interest to the sensation-driven technologies of our world image? (3)

According to him, only "writer-activists" can bring slow violence into visibility through their creative expression. Niger Delta is privileged to bring out such writers.

Both Helon Habila and Kaine Agary have successfully brought the violence of pertoculture and its effects on the fragile ecology of the Niger Delta. The novels hold testimony to how "[o]ur oil-fuelled neoliberal economies and the vicious, voracious practices of globalisation have created conditions of increasing disparity between rich and poor, and have feminised/ wife-ized" the inhabitants of the Niger Delta (Wilson 24). Both the novels represent the disenfranchisement of the community in the Niger Delta and the various kind of

displacement or the desire for displacement in them. The books expose how the socio-cultural fabric of the Delta is transformed by oil, leading to the violation of fundamental civil and gender rights. In this manner, the books render the deception of the petro-magic and juxtapose it with the horrors of slow violence. Both novels are representative works that act as testimonials against the injustice in the Niger Delta and are fine examples of eco-activism.

Chapter V

Conclusion

"Strange, strange are the dynamics of oil and the ways of oilmen."

- Thomas Pynchon

Oil is natural matter, a product generated by the decomposition of organic matter for millions of years. In the past two hundred years, oil has fashioned the world and the human species in various dimensions and established its own space in the geopolitical hegemonic global system. The modern industrial civilisation of human beings was crafted by crude oil energy. As Allan Stoekl remarks in his Foreword to the book *Oil Culture*, "[Oil] is dumb matter, a natural offshoot of natural processes, gunk in the ground, that we use, and that uses us, keeping us prisoner to our energy slaves, to the rich energy inputs that we find so hard— even impossible—to derive from any other energy source" (Barrett xiii). Thus the inanimate physical matter seems to be invested with the power to manipulate the political, social and cultural configurations of the world, redesigning the concepts of freedom, mobility and progress.

Nevertheless, even while the world remains inundated with the modernity established by the crude oil resource, the lubricant remains imperceptible to the common populace. The consumption of oil away from the sites of extraction and purification conceal the texture of the oil from universal imagination. Oil is often extolled as clean energy shipped across continents and conveyed to the consumer hubs through trucks. The explosive clatter of drilling, the rigging and the fracking, and the working of mammoth-like machinery do not reach the

customer, as these terrains are thoroughly veiled by the capitalist system that endeavours to flourish in the indiscernible nature of oil.

Accordingly, a twenty-first-century man whose life is determined by crude oil is completely obscured from oil's origin and geopolitics. Literature, too, seemed to have maintained its silence in making oil tangible. As Amitav Ghosh describes, crude oil averted writers from embracing it until late due to the unfathomable social and political blemishes it generated during the utilitarian and vehement pursuit of the fossil fuel resource using military and ideological persuasions (29). Consequently, the crude oil resource which brought about an epochal shift in man's concepts of modernity did not translate into the imaginative realm of novels.

The study identifies and analyses petrofiction set in the oil extraction sites in the global energy map. Even though identifying oil extraction sites was undemanding, detecting and discovering petrofiction in the extraction sites was arduous. For instance, Venezuela is considered one of the largest oil reserves globally, but identifying a work of Venezuelan fiction in which oil is visibly discernible was challenging. Nevertheless, the research detects five primary texts set in various extractive sacrifice zones spread across three continents. Through these novels, namely Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* (1991), Jennifer Haigh's *Heat and Light* (2016), Abdelrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* (1984), Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* (2010) and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*(2006), the research evaluates the ambivalent petrocultural transition in the diverse sacrifice zones. The investigation is based on the hypothesis that oil is an active capitalist commodity that alters the extraction sites through its petro-modern and petrocapitalist statergies. This, in turn, leads to slow violence in the specific

sites experienced in varying degrees in each territory. The study attempts to decipher the oil generated 'development' in specific regions and the social, cultural and environmental sacrifice it demands.

The political, economic, and developmental statuses of the three countries are widely divergent. Therefore the impact oil has on these states is also different. Nevertheless, one major factor which makes them analogous is the presence of oil sacrifice zones. As Naomi Klein states, "Running an economy on energy sources that release poisons as an unavoidable part of their extraction and refining has always required sacrifice zones"(275). The populace in all the oil terrains discussed seems to be "categorised as less than fully human, which made their poisoning in the name of progress somehow acceptable" (Klein 275).

However, when an investigation is carried out in the select works, none of the extractive community initially perceives themselves as scapegoats. Instead, the population is immersed in the discourse of energy utopia that locates crude oil as the recipe that provides "a "good life" that transcends the conflicts of environment, justice, and politics" (Schneider 138). The aspirational desire for such an energy utopia leads the communities in all sacrifice regions to trauma. As Frederick Buell opines, "oil exuberance was wedded all too clearly to oil catastrophe in a high-profile marriage of absolute opposites" (289). This fusion of the two is both "complex and polyvalent" (Buell 287). This intriguing intricacy can be witnessed in all the zones discussed. Nevertheless, the exuberance and the catastrophe they experience seem to be varied and, to a certain extent, dependent on the political and social terrains they dwell in.

All three areas and the literary texts selected are of unique importance. While all the regions have much in common regarding oil excavation, imperialism, displacement and ecological degradation, they cannot be grouped and read as a homogenous body. While America is a country which thrives on oil and has built its modern capitalist society on oil economy, the Middle-East Arabian societies have a different story to narrate. In Arabian society, oil wealth has given rise to backward monarchies instead of modernisation. In association with religious institutions and the West, these monarchies have robbed immense prosperity from their own populace.

Along with this deceit are the numerous "oil-wars" fought in the Arabian Peninsula, complicating the arena's status. Both America and the Arabian nations have economically benefited from the oil revenues to a great extent. This is not the case with a third world nation like Nigeria. The effects of savage rape of the environment and the nation have been seriously felt here. Whatever revenue the cursed resource generates goes into the hands of the petro-capitalists, thereby contributing to economic disparity and social instability. This discrepancy manifests in the distinctive manner petromodernity emerges in each oil state.

As opined by Joshua Schuster, oil "may not be just a keyword into modernity but is arguably one of its primary enabling events" (198). One can trace the yearning for affluence and modernity in all the oil terrains discussed. This is detailed in the petrofictions discussed, through the dreams of the Bedouins represented by Munif, whose world echoes with the promise of gold and riches under their feet, and in the fantasies of the tribal villagers described in Habila's and Agary's novels. In Habila's *Oil on Water*, the readers witness the

villagers feasting for weeks when their territory is discovered with crude oil. Similar excitement can be traced in the Osage natives of *Mean Spirit,* who are unexpectedly consecrated with petro dollars and in Haigh's *Heat and Light,* where the community attempts to hold on to the energy money they believe they lost by leasing out their lands for hydraulic drilling.

While the Bedouins in Wadi and the native villagers in the Niger Delta were not provided with an alternative but to accept the oil resource and the resource hunters into the land, Rich Delvin, a Euroamerican, individually opted for the oil-induced economic prosperity, knowing its upshots. This power to choose is denied to the Osage community of Oklahoma who belongs to the same oil nation. Consequently, while the Mackey couple could deny access to fracking proposed by the oil company, Belle Graycloud is not given a choice except to manually hide the oil pool in her land from the capitalist eyes. Thus there is a distinction visible in the decision-making powers conferred upon the individuals who belong to different communities. The privileged Euroamerican citizen, as represented by Rich Delvin, is bequeathed more autonomy in determining his fate in contrast to the above-discussed naïve populace in the Middle East, Nigeria, and even the indigenous community in America. Here the historically underprivileged faction of the society is judged as "eminently deserving of sacrifice" and is pushed to the voiceless periphery (Klein 224).

The bureaucratic and capitalist agents like John Hale in *Mean Spirit,* Bobby Frame in *Heat and Light,* Ibn Rasheed in *Cities of Salt,* and Port Harcourt's politicians in *Oil on Water* and *Yellow-Yellow* thrust the reverie of exuberance upon the respective communities through persuasion and false assurances. In all cases, compensation in energy revenue is guaranteed to the

extractive communities. However, except for the terrains in America, the contracts and the promised compensations in the other regions are either forgotten or neglected. While this disregard for the promises results in resistance from the Wadi people in Harran, the Desert Forces stifle the dissent that emerges in the region. The same can be observed in the Niger Delta, where the Task Forces constantly battle with the community. However, the resistance in the Delta leads to the emergence of the militant force, which is equally violent and hostile to the common populace.

The augur of petromodernity materialises. However, most of it exists in townships or cities, far from the extraction sites. These townships and cities are centred around the crude oil commodity and its trade centres. Thus, in the kingdom of Mooran, the American oil conglomerates recreate the coastal region of Harran into a metropolitan city. Harran acts as an oil town where oil installations are set up and oil exportation is conducted. While Wadi al-Uyon, the oil extraction zone, is destroyed irretrievably into a comatose of barbed wires, Harran is consecrated with the petromodern facilities, including motor transportation, roadways, radio, telescope, bakeries, modern medicines, magazines etc. Likewise, in Niger Delta, while the native tribes are precluded from the petromodern prosperity, Port Harcourt and Lagos, where significant refineries are situated, emerge into an immigrant cities where powerful politicians and foreign oil capitalists reign. The select novels from the Delta portray how the protagonists of both the novels, Rufus and Zilayefa, travel to Port Harcourt to pursue a career and livelihood. In fact, Zilayefa is fascinated by the amenities and luxuries available in the city compared to the pitiful existence she had in her village. Similarly, Chief Ibrahim in *Oil on Water* looks forward to

sending the young men to Port Harcourt to find their luck. However, both Harran and Port Harcourt are plugged with corruption and exploitation. The above illustration shows the emergence of petromodernity along the Western ideology in both the oil states. In both instances, the crude oil commodity brings modernity to the state. Both the oil territories lack a spatial centre before the discovery of oil. As a result, the whole process of modernity is directed and managed by the multinational oil capitalists' caprices that colonise the territory.

Due to several reasons, the case is not similar in the American oil terrains. Firstly, in variance to the earlier territories discussed, America is not a resource colony. Instead, it shifted into a politically resilient democracy in 1776, years before oil was discovered. America was a vibrant trading nation even before that. Thus, in contrast to the other territories where the anti-democratic power of oil is evident**,** the stability of the governing structure of the US remained solid and hardy. Secondly, the state of America is one of the world's largest consumers of petroleum resources. Thus the excavations in the different zones in America tend to enhance consumerism forcing the state to remain responsible for the sacrifice zones. However, a study of the novels reveals how the inhabitants of these terrains are considered marginalised peripheries that nourish the energy demands of the centre. This is particularly evident in *Mean Spirit*, which describes the Euro-Americans' racial discrimination toward the Osage natives. The inferior identity of the natives is manipulated by the oil conglomerates, thereby manoeuvring economic and social exploitations in the land. The same is manifested in Hogan's *Heat and Light*, where capitalist oil rulers utilise the ambiguities in the federal environmental laws to deceive and swindle the inhabitants. Even when autonomy is given to the private owners of

oil lands, to abide by one's own autonomy is challenging as evident in the context of the Mackey couples.

An analysis of the automobile culture in these countries can provide more insight into the evolution of modernity in these countries. As LeMenegar remarks, automobile culture was an immediate offshoot of petroculture, and an investigation into this aspect of the select novels explains how modernity differed in each nation (82). Accordingly, in the democratic state of America, oil-induced modernity led to an automobile revolution made accessible even to the marginalised disposable people of the extraction sites. Thus, the exuberance relished by the Osage people, as described by Linda Hogan is immense. While Michael Horse possesses a gold-platted car, Jim Josh uses the vehicle as a hothouse for his vegetables. Thus automobility embraces the native landowners of the Osage tribe with a generosity not present in the Middle East or Nigeria. Even though one can observe the expansion of road transportation for the commoners in the Middle East with the emergence of trucks driven by Raji and Akoub in *Cities of Salt*, the luxurious cars were still reserved for the emir and the oil elite. As for the inhabitants of Nigeria, the constant destruction of infrastructure by the militants and the negligence of the government agencies led to very few developments in transportation services. The reader of the two select novels from the Delta never witnesses proper transportation in the villages where oil is spilt around every nook and corner of the arena. However, in Port Harcourt, one can observe the presence of opulent and comfortable motor vehicles, which again points to the rift in the infrastructural advancement between the villages and the metropolitan.

Another significant theme of discussion in the thesis is the effect of oil capitalism on the specific oil terrains taken up for study. As Imre Szeman had argued in his "System Failure: Oil, Futurity, and the Anticipation of Disaster", the capitalist world order is found in fossil fuel energy resources, where oil capital has a crucial role to act (2). The fundamental principle of petrocapitalism is the perception of oil as a commodity. The notion is visible in all the extractive zones except the Niger Delta. Both the writers of the Delta have consciously prevented themselves from representing oil as a commercial capitalist product that generates revenue. Instead, they have merged the inorganic oil with the ruined organic nature, thereby focusing more on the environmental annihilation that the Delta faces. This is evident in Habila's *Oil and Water,* where oil is amalgamated with nature and with the numerous oil-nature multipart imageries as discussed in chapter three.

Nevertheless, the American and Gulf terrains visibly depict the commoditised crude oil. While petrofiction from the US, *Mean Spirit* and *Heat and Light*, point to the wealth-breeding feature of the fossil fuels that either bestow or assures the resource-owners with riches and assets, the oil epic from the gulf region, *Cities of Salt*, depicts an absolute oil-determined capitalist system, where the absolute reign over the proletariats by the affluent bourgeoisie is visible.

However, the incidence of the resource below the subsoil forces the capitalists to gain access to the land by direct or indirect mode of imperialism. However, in the twentieth century, when colonisation was deemed unprincipled and dishonourable, the capitalists were compelled to indulge in new conspiracies to create resource colonies that could satisfy the world's oil addiction and

preserve the petrocultural world order. These resource colonies might be inside the state's geographical boundaries as in the context of the US or outside the state's geographical boundaries, as in the Middle East or Nigeria. Whatsoever the state of affairs is, this prerequisite of a colony which can be plundered mercilessly leads to different kinds of conflicts in all the oil terrains. These diverse conflicts are manifested in the books discussed.

The initial conflict that can be discerned in the resource colonies is between the local inhabitants or the ecosystem people who dwell in the land and the capitalist oil companies. All the novels depict the local inhabitants in the extraction sites as ecosystem people who "depend for their livelihood on modest resource catchment areas" (Nixon 21). Most of these inhabitants in the pre-oil period depended on agriculture or fishing for sustenance in these regions. This is compellingly represented in the select fictional works through the Bedouin people of Mooran and the villagers of the Niger Delta. Even the Osage people, represented in *Mean Spirit*, were initially the river people who lived in the hills away from the material world. As for the inhabitants of Bakerton in Haigh's *Heat and Light*, the earlier coal capitalism had brought in conflicts which seem unresolved. However, the characters represented, Rich Devlin and the Mackey couples, seem to be engaged in an attempt to bring agrarian livelihood back to their life. Thus they could also be considered ecosystem people.

Oil capitalism's entry into this world with its elongated tentacles brings in conflicts and contradictions with the occupants of the land. While the conflicts in the Gulf region, as depicted by Abdelrahman Munif, were pacified effortlessly by the emir through ideological persuasions and threats, the circumstances in the other oil terrains were convoluted. Even when conflict between the exploiter and

the exploited is detected in the American oil fictions, the exploited people of the extractive sites are rarely provided with a voice to demonstrate their dissent. The browbeaten Osage tribe support each other through the trauma, but they rarely have a scaffold to lean on. Similarly, Rich Devlin's complaints to the authorities or Mackey's protests do not deter the capitalists. The capitalist system had corrupted the agencies to such an extent that the resistive voices are often unregistered. However, in the Niger Delta, the transformation of young men of the village into organised militants can be noticed. Violence is used as a bludgeon to resist the capitalists in the arena with attacks on oil installations and other infrastructure. The militants indulge in kidnapping and killing too. For instance, the whole plot of *Oil on Water* revolves around the abduction of Isabelle Floode, the wife of the British oil engineer, by the militants.

The examination of the divergent reaction of the oil capitalists in the conflict zones is also significant. The petro-capitalists in the kingdom of Mooran, Niger Delta, and the American extractive zones collaborate with the political powers of oil states to manipulate the citizens of the specific regions. However, their attitude and approach to each terrain are distinctive. In fact, one can witness distinct approaches within the geographical zones of the American extractive zones. For instance, it was effortless for the Euroamerican petrocapitalists to deem the Osage tribe as pawns of prosperity due to the inherent racial prejudice towards them. However, in Bakerton, the capitalists had to battle the dissenting voices by promising the community immense economic prosperity. When violence was employed against the indigenous people of Oklahoma, as described in *The Mean Spirit*, the oil conglomerates had to seek the aid of scientific and government agencies to swindle and pacify the

community in *Heat and Light*. A different scheme is employed in the Middle East, where the American oil engineers suppressed their racial preconceptions about the Arabs. As depicted in *Cities of Salt*, the foreigners learned the language and culture of the prospective resource colony and, in the initial stages of neo-colonisation, took oaths declaring Allah as God to reassure the Bedouin community about their intentions. However, no such persuasions or promises seem obligatory in the Niger Delta, where the capitalists consider the inhabitants as perpetrators of violence destroying their infrastructural capitals. The racial bigotry towards the community assists the capitalists in prolonging the hostility against the people.

The second skirmish visible in a petrocapitalist state is between the oil corporation and the oil states. In all of the oil states discussed, crude oil resources have significantly facilitated and sustained the political system. Except for America, the other countries under discussion, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, and most Gulf countries are conceded as petro-states . The oil-rich governments in these petrostates relied on capitalist oil corporations. Hence, most of the misconducts and transgressions of the oil corporations were overlooked. Thus in *Cities of Salt*, the emir is represented as a hock in the hands of the American capitalist corporation. The oil cooperation takes decisions on behalf of the emir regarding compensation for Mizban's death and the worker's strike. This leads to unease and scruffles between the empire and the emir. In Niger Delta, the case is a bit more complicated.

In contrast to the oligarchy in the Middle East countries where the ruling sheikhs control the state affairs, the Nigerian oil state was under dictatorial rule. In addition, were quarrels between the different ethnic groups who had

representatives in the country's bureaucratic system. The voices of the people were ignored, and the government seemed unmoved by the plight of the people. In *Yellow-Yellow*, Agary portrays the situation where the Minister of Petroleum remained unflustered and passive even when there was a shortage of petrol in the country. Even under pressure from the native community, the government attempts to circumvent a direct confrontation with the multinational foreign corporations. Accordingly, in both the petro-states discussed, the governments were visibly dependent on their oil masters and at times of conflict, they either submitted themselves to the capitalist oil companies or attempted to reach an amicable negotiation.

On the other hand, America was not a petro-state, but a capitalist nation with the largest number of crude oil consumers. As LeMenager states, "The American middle class bloomed in a "bower" of natural gas and petroleum" (5). It is one of the countries which had encouraged private entry into the oil business. Yet, both novels abstain from discussing any direct tussles between the country and the oil corporations. Instead, both novels depict the state as an accomplice who aids the capitalist agents in betraying and misinforming the community. Thus in *Mean Spirit*, the government aids in bending the rules to categorise certain persons in the Osage tribe as incompetent. The same is reflected in *Heat and Light*, wherein Rich Devlin complains about the department of Environmental Protection, which conspired with the capitalist conglomerates disregarding the interests of the ordinary citizens.

The third kind of discordance visible is between the community and the government. As mentioned earlier, the state endows certain privileges on oil companies. These excessive concessions and services often position the citizens

against the company. The government's allegiance towards the oil companies is questioned in all the novels discussed. The instances of these corrupt alliances are already detailed in the chapters and discussed in the prior paragraphs.

Another form of conflict perceptible in a petro-capitalist state is between oil workers and oil companies. None of the select petrofiction except for *Cities of Salt* had dealt with this skirmish elaborately. In Nigeria, most oil companies employ expatriates to work for them. This is mainly due to two reasons: firstly, the oil installations and the purification procedures were carried out in a secretive manner in the Niger Delta owing to its specific social and political condition; secondly, the constant hostilities emerging from the natives of the Delta prevented the companies from hiring them. As a result, the plight of the oil workers is entirely invisible in the novels from the region. This invisibility is noticeable in *Mean Spirit* too, where no oil workers are depicted, except for the capitalist agents. Nonetheless, in her *Heat and Light*, Haigh has described the plight of Pat Devlin, a miner who suffered from the curse of coal during the former energy regime.

Munif, in his novel, portrays the alienation faced by the workers, which is closely connected with the concept of *enfremdung*,as described by Karl Marx. The third chapter of the thesis identifies the different forms of alienation in the workers, including alienation from the product and process of labour, estrangement from others, and *Gattungswesen*. This and the lack of essential workers' rights, namely, better work conditions and housing, job protection and compensation for work-related accidents, led the working class to industrial strikes. Eventually, the capitalists and the state used force to put down the strike. Similar to the workers of Harran was the situation of Pat Devlin. He also

suffered from bad working conditions and died of pollutant-triggered lung cancer. While Munif describes the alienation and power of the union in such capitalist setups, Haigh portrays how the energy regimes, through the years, had overlooked the health and life of the workers in their hunt for fossil fuel resources. As Caffentiz argues in his *No Blood For Oil: Essays on Energy, Class Struggle and War, 1998-2017*, petrocapitalism is a war fought "between and within classes," and the motives can be traced as "profit, wage, interest or rent" (121). The rationale mentioned above becomes the root cause of all the conflicts discussed above.

The third feature of petrocapitalism is the "high organic composition of capital, meaning that it embraces large amounts of machines and equipments" (Aborisade 35). This is evident in all the oil terrains discussed. As Macdonald remarks, the petromodern world is symbolised by powerful machineries and diabolic technologies (21). In turn, this world is built by the mechanics of petrocapitalism as manifested in the select novels. Thus Haigh, through Rich Devlin portrays the nuisance of the 'hulking machines' comparable to 'a tropical storm' (Haigh 195,215). Similarly, the sounds from the extraction sites of Oklahoma make Michael Horse "restless and weary" (Hogan 40). In Wadi, the Bedouins are the "iron machines" that produced light as bright as the "shooting stars" (Munif 98). As for the Niger Delta, "the gas flares" and "the stumps of pipes from exhausted wells" transported capitalist modernity to the country (Habila 175). This lack of direct labour in due course, leads to a lack of employment, specifically evident in the Niger Delta.

The discordance intrinsic in the very essence of petrocapitalism widens with its expansion. As Nikolai Bukharin opines, "every capitalist expansion

leads sooner or later to a bloody climax" (142). Such petro-violence detectable in the select works for investigation is divided into spectacular and slow violence described by Rob Nixon in his work, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. While spectacular violence receives media visibility and quick response from people, slow violence, catalysed by petrocapitalism seems to receive little attention.

Spectacular violence in the sacrifice zones is visible in all the oil novels deliberated on in the thesis. This petro violence is disseminated through the activities of various groups, which include:

a. The Authoritative Government and Its Agencies
b. The Dominant and Formidable Capitalists
c. The Defiant and Belligerent Activists of the Community
d. The Oil Yearning Faction in the Society.

The role played by the government in sustaining petrocapitalism in their respective countries has been discussed earlier. While the administration indulged in ideological persuasions in certain regions, certain other terrains witnessed vicious harassment. In both the petrolist states of Saudi Arabia and Nigeria, the government themselves participate in promulgating aggressive and discernible violence. They employ the military or police force to abet capitalists displacing the citizens and annexing the oil terrains. However, such targeted and explicit violence is absent in the context of America. Even when Linda Hogan depicts crimes and murders in *Mean Spirit*, the capitalists are often deemed as the perpetrator. Rarely does government engage in direct violence. However, the law and order departments and the judiciary are often co-conspirators in the murders planned and executed by the capitalist agents.

Accordingly, the second group which enables spectacular violence is the oil capitalists. In pursuit of profit, they often fashion violence against the community, wherein the government acts as an apparatus that implements their will. Thus, the petrofiction from the American oil terrain depicts the oil capitalists as the primary antagonist. Thus Jim Josh in *The Mean Spirit* is the profit-stimulated capitalist agent who exercises violence against the Osage community. However, such a direct demonstration of spectacular violence triggered by the capitalist body is absent in Haigh's *Heat and Light*. In the Middle East, as depicted by Munif in *Cities of Salt*, the Bedouin community does not face visible violence from the imperialist oil companies. Nevertheless, with the worker's strike in Harran, the multinational corporation becomes antagonistic and employed repressive and brutal measures against the oil community. However, Africa is the epitome of petroviolence where oil and blood are muddled up in an indistinguishable manner, where capitalists act as active agents who direct and organise venomous violence against nature and the community.

The third faction that propagates spectacular violence is the revolutionaries and militants critical of and hostile to the oil conglomeration. While such a faction is invisible in select American novels, one can witness antagonistic voices of dissent from the Middle East and Nigeria. In the Middle East, the voices of resistance are represented in *Cities of Salt* in the form of working class strike, wherein the oil workers strike to gain access to their rightful privileges and claims. However, the petro violence depicted in both *Oil and Water* and *Yellow-Yellow* is more horrendous. The armed militants or revolutionaries and their constant conflicts with the police force and the community transform the region into a blood-stained borough.

The final group responsible for promulgating spectacular violence is the community itself. This is usually observed in regions where the inhabitants are caught between oil exuberance and oil catastrophe. This is discernible in *Heat and Light,* in which Haigh depicts the antagonism of the community against the Mackey couple, who refuse to sign the lease agreement with the oil company. The people indulge in violence to scare and threaten the couple into signing the deal. Such hostility among the community is visible in *Cities of Salt* too. However, the hostility does not turn into violence at any time.

All petro violence enacted receives high visibility in the eyes of the citizens and other participants involved in and around the extractive zones. In fact, the spectacular violence in the Niger Delta is universally condemned by the citizens of the world and the Human Rights Group deliberated and act upon the issue. Similar is the case in Oklahoma, where public judgment forced the government to take charge of the murders. In the Middle East, the visible worker's resistance also coerced the government to change the labour policies of the oil companies. The visibility of such violence had led to these changes.

However, certain violence is not spectacular as the ones discussed. Instead they are “slow and long lasting, calamities that patiently dispense their devastation while remaining outside our flickering attention spans” (Nixon 6). They “are low in instant spectacle but high in long-term effects” (Nixon 10). Consequently, the victims of slow violence are often overlooked or dispensed with. The novels studied in the thesis have discussed and emphasised this particular violence in the selected locations. This affects the ecology, the community and the individual in varied modes, namely environmental dilapidation, displacement and personal trauma.

While *Mean Spirit* does not overtly deal with the environmental effects of oil excavation, Haigh's *Heat and Light* depicts water contamination as a direct product of drilling. Similar chaos can be witnessed in Wadi al-Uyon where Munif craftily illustrates the concerns about the destruction of colossal tree species, global warming and water scarcity. However, the most intricate and multifarious ecological catastrophe is witnessed in the Niger Delta, where ecological racism manifests in the most deplorable manner possible. The haphazard oil spills, contamination of water resources, and oil leakages into agricultural lands are all instances of environmental violence depicted in the select novels. Written by writer-activists, *Oil and Water* and *Yellow-Yellow* reeks of oil-invigorated contamination.

The community living in such an environment enveloped by slow violence is preyed by the senseless oil ethos built by petromodern capitalism. Thus, the state perceives the resource-endowed land as a permit to attain affluence, and the native community is forcefully expelled from their own land. This kind of displacement is visible in *Oil and Water* and *Cities of Salt,* where the tribal community led by Chief Malabo and the Bedouins of Wadi are cast out of land for the "greater good" of the state by the government and the oil capitalists. Here the displacement is direct, wherein they become developmental refugees who are promised compensation and other special privileges. However, most of these promises are overlooked, and the community is forced to endure the misery of exile.

Another mode of petro-dispossession endured by the inhabitants in the oil zone is the migration ensuing from petro violence and violence of the ecosystem. Thus Hogan in her *Mean Spirit,* portrays the émigré Osage tribe relocating

themselves owing to constant violence and threat the oil capitalists force upon them. Likewise, the community in the Niger Delta is also forced to move to other regions with the destruction of their livelihood, as represented in the select novels. In addition to this is the carnage caused by the conflicts initiated by the military and the militants. Habila details these tussles in the Delta in *Oil and Water*.

However, the most traumatic form of displacement in these oil sites is stationary displacement. While the aggression involved in the earlier forms of resettlement is detectable and discerned by the spectators, the effect of stationary displacement is often ignored or unseen. This 'displacement without moving' is palpable in all the novels chosen for study. The capitalist corporeal violence visible in *Mean Spirit* suspends Nora Blanket and the Graycloud family in a devious space where they lose the safe abode they have created. Similarly, Rich Devlin in *Heat and Light* cannot accept the changes brought by fracking in his land; nevertheless, he is forced to live with the change, however harrowing it might be. Conversely, the case of the inhabitants in Wadi al-Uyom is distinct. In association with the government, the capitalists had completely forayed the oasis, forcing the inhabitants to move away. However, the few individuals who remained in Wadi to collect their compensation, like Shaalan, witnessed the unbelievable and shocking transformation of Wadi. However, the worst circumstance is noticeable in the Delta, where the inhabitants who lost their livelihood live in a toxic space pervaded by petro violence and zilch human rights.

The slow violence disseminated in the environment and the community affects the individuals too. While Grace Blanket, Sara Blanket, and several

others lose their lives in the capitalist battle for oil in Oklahoma, others like Benoit and Nora Blanket are flanked by oil. The same can be perceived in the Middle East, where the psychoterratic illness of 'solastalgia' is observable in Umm Khosh and Wadha. In the terrain of the Niger Delta, both the protagonists, Rufus and Zilayefa of *Oil and Water* and *Yellow-Yellow,* respectively, are victims of oil accidents. In fact, they carried their trauma for several years and the remains stay as raw and sore memories

Another feature the study discerned is the petro-sexual-politics in the oil states. Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow,* one of the first novels from Niger Delta, portrays women in relation to the oil state has been examined in Chapter four. The investigation details how women undergo multiple forms of violence in a capitalist world rooted in patriarchal ideologies. Akin to the oil land, the female body is depicted as territories to be conquered and annexed. Such a depiction of the female body as a commodity similar to oil can be witnessed in *Cities of Salt,* where the ships arrive at the port of Haaran with half-clad women who inveigle the American oil workers. Here oil and women are rendered as commodities to satisfy the male consumerist greed. Parallel to this is the representation of women in *Mean Spirit,* where the Osage women with oil headrights are considered tickets to acquire oil revenue by Euroamerican men. The women in the novel are victims of petrocapitalism. Such victimhood is visible in *Oil and Water,* where the burnt face of Boma symbolises the annihilated land that needs to be reawakened and recharged.

Thus the study of the select novels using petrocultural theories has proved the hypothesis statement and has led to the following findings:

1. Oil is a capitalist commodity of geopolitical significance which creates an illusion of prosperity and progress. The initial exuberance that often escorts the discovery of crude oil resources in a community often leads to catastrophe and disappointment.
2. The petromodernity in the extractive sacrifice zones is superficial, often privileging the hegemonically powerful. Furthermore, the accessibility of oil modernity varies from zone to zone, based on the socio-political condition of the oil state.
3. Petrocapitalism, which has its tentacles rooted throughout the world, generates social, cultural, economic and class conflicts within and beyond the borders of the oil state. The government and its various bodies are pawns in the hands of the oil capitalists.
4. Petro-sexual politics is observed in the novels where women are often considered a commodity similar to crude oil or conquered by the capitalists similar to oil lands.
5. There is a correlation between the marginal status of a community and the petro violence employed on them. Thus the indigenous groups are often discriminated as visible in the case of the select novels.
6. Both slow and spectacular violence can be observed in varied degrees in different oil territories. The developmental refugees and those who undergo stationary displacement suffer from psycho-terratic traumas.

The study "Petrocapitalism, Oil Modernity and Enviro-Justice in the Extractive Sacrifice Zones: A Study on Select Petrofiction", analyses humanity doused in oil culture which depends on the sacrifice zones for its sustenance. The oil communities of the sacrifice zones have identified their affliction as

inherent in the resource itself- a ‘resource curse’. Yet the ‘petro-magical’ promise of prosperity puts them in an ambivalent dilemma. In fact the whole world is in such a kind of a dilemma wherein on one hand a life without oil is beyond our imagination, while life with oil implies an impending apocalypse on the other. To confront this baffling state, the oil queries must be acknowledged and addressed and the hydrocarbon world must be made sense of. Borrowing the words of LeMenager, “I am not a political scientist, economist, or engineer, and my point is not to prophesy the future of fossil fuels, but rather to consider how the story of petroleum has come to play a fundamental role in the [global] imagination and therefore in the future of life on earth” (4).

In this century when the the crude oil extraction had reached an enhanced rate than at any time in history the search for new ‘sacrifice zones’ is necessitated. Even when the populace is more and more aware of the dire consequence of the addictive crude oil energy, a stable alternative seems to be absent. Consequently, this investigation is of immense significance in the present century when the oil tales remain obscured, and stories of resource wars which forcibly and persuasively apposite and restructure neo-colonised ecology and lives are forcibly appropriated through the petrocapitalist stratergies. The globalised capitalist powers have positioned oil in the realms of the unconscious, blurring the struggles of the extractive communities. Therefore the researchers in humanities should critically attend to crude oil, and its geopolitical, social, cultural and ecological consequences. They should attempt to understand the intricate and multifaceted ways fossil fuel energy has shaped the social and cultural imaginaries and analyse the ways by which crude oil is comprehended in society.

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Appendix
List of Published Articles

Sl. No	Author	Title of Publication	Journal/ Anthology Name, Vol. No. & Year	National/ International	ISSN/ ISBN	Impact Factor
1	Priyanka M.C.	Oil Rights/Riots in the Niger Delta: Petropolitics and Human Rights Violation in Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*	Criterion: An International Journal in English, Vol. 10, Issue 3, June 2019	International	ISSN 09768165	7.86
2	Priyanka M.C.	(D)Ripping Oil: Petrocapitalism in Mei Mei Evans's *Oil and Water*	Singularities: A Peer Reviewed International Transdisciplinary Biannual Research Journal Vol.9, Issue 2, July 2022	National	ISSN 23483369	

CHAPTER VI

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study, "Petrocapitalism, Oil Modernity and Enviro-Justice in the Extractive Sacrifice Zones: A Study on Select Petrofiction" is based on the concept of commodity regionalism. The investigation attempts to comprehend the diverse manners in which petrocapitalism and petromodernity shape the specific extractive oil zones in Pennsylvania, Niger Delta and the Arab lands. The study has conducted a detailed investigation on select petrofiction and several questions pertaining to the creation of oil sacrifice zones, marginalisation of oil communities, petro-violence, petro-sexual politics and enviro-justice have been answered. The inquiry also dealt with the idea of slow violence and diverse modes of displacement faced by the oil community and its consequences.

The constraints faced during research were: Petrocultural studies is in the nascent development stage, surpassing numerous challenges. As a result, there was a lack of a canonical invariant theory and conceptual vocabulary to which all petro-critics agreed. This is observable from the discordance evident in the field's attempt to define "petrofiction" as discussed in the introductory chapter. Since petrofiction is a genre in the burgeoning phase, attempts to discover specific fictions suitable for the study were difficult. As a result, the research had to opt for a comparative study of oil arenas where imaginative texts were available. Search for petrofiction set in the extractive zones in India, Venezuela, and most Arab regions were unsuccessful. Thus the study had to be restricted to the particular terrains chosen for analysis. While the political, economic, and cultural aspects were covered across disciplines, the concept of petro-aesthetics remain unexplored as it is outside the frame of reference of the thesis .

The study can be furthered by reading petrofiction in varied manners. Firstly, oil fiction can be analysed within a literary and cultural studies scaffold. For instance, a scholar in literature could read petrofiction using the emerging theories of oil aesthetics put forward by critics like Stephanie LeMenager. The framework of energy humanities to discuss various kinds of "energy-literature" spread across ages, as suggested by Patricia Yaeger, can also be a helpful tool. Thus Jennifer Haigh's *Heat and Light*, discussed in the study, can be read alongside her earlier work *Baker Towers* to make sense of the two different energy eras in the same terrain.

Petrofiction can also be read in the context of cli-fi literature, wherein the concepts of ecological annihilation and global warming can be discussed. In an Indian context, especially in the regional context of Kerala, petrocultural studies could be widened with an analysis of the Gulf Diaspora. Such an attempt is made by Priya Menon, who designated Benyamin's *Goat Days* and Deepak Unnikrishnan's "In Mussafah Grew People" as petrofiction. Though research has been conducted on the terrains of North America, Europe and the Niger Delta, most of the extractive terrains are still untouched by petrocultural and enviro-justice studies.

A corresponding method of examining petrofiction is in relation to interdisciplinary theories in economics and other social sciences. The concepts of political ecology and enviro-justice can be employed to analyse the literary texts. One such concept which can be included in the study is Karen Thornber's concept of "Ecoambiguity", which appears in her work *Ecoambiguity: Environmental Crises and East Asian Literatur*es. According to Thornber, "Environmental ambiguity manifests itself in multiple, intertwined ways,

including ambivalent attitudes toward nature; confusion about the actual condition of the nonhuman, often a consequence of ambiguous information"(4). Such a study on petrofiction may highlight the ambivalent attitude of the present world towards fossil fuel energy. Instead of being considered a disconnected discourse, the literary texts can be read parallelly with other historical, social, political, and environmental data. A research project could be undertaken to probe into the different psycho-terratic ailments related to oil mining about which the thesis has discussed. Another concept in political ecology which could be employed in the study of petrofiction is the concept of "ecological-debt". Such a study could focus more on the green responsibility required from the fossil fuel consumers worldwide in oil sacrifice zones.

Given that the world is becoming more and more oil dependent, an investigation on the genre of petrofiction will enable one to make sense of the fuel energy resource that has remained mystically invisible for a long time. Therefore, it is significant to explore how oil had manifested itself in the imaginative realms of art and other cultural media. Further study can be helpful to make sense of the oil stories, discover the hidden lives of oil in the tale and expose it to the public. Thus the emerging field of petrocultural studies proffers a plethora of queries and prospects in the field of literature and cultural studies.