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Neocolonial Disruption: Mapping Slow Violence and Lost Future in Chimmeka Garrick's *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* (2010)

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the theme of temporal disruption and environmental injustice in Chimeka Garrick's *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*, through the lens of slow violence and neocolonialism. Focusing on how systemic extractivism and neocolonial practices undermine ecological stability and the community's sense of future, the study examines the novel's depiction of the Niger Delta as a site where time and health are systematically stolen. Drawing on Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence, the analysis demonstrates that environmental degradation in the narrative is not a sudden catastrophe but a protracted process that erodes the prospects for sustainable future. By mapping the "ecology of loss" within the fictional town of Asiama, the paper reveals how the collusion between the Nigerian state and multinational oil corporations perpetuates a cycle of systemic harm that puts the community's present at a severe jolt while making its (the community's) future wasted through the slow violence perpetrated by the trans-corporeal activities. Through the experiences of four protagonists embodying divergent responses—ranging from militant resistance to failed dialogue—the study highlights how toxic landscapes infiltrate both physical bodies and moral consciousness, illustrating the concept of

trans-corporeality. Ultimately, the paper argues that Garricks' narrative challenges the myth of linear progress and exposes the Niger Delta as a terminal zone of the Petrocene era, where the theft of time and health demands a critical re-evaluation of global energy ethics and a confrontation with the persistent and often invisible slow violence inflicted on the marginalized communities.

Introduction: The Chronotope of the Oil Field

Chimeka Garrick's *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* (2010) signals a temporal paradox that captures the psychic and material dislocations of oil extraction in the Niger Delta. "Yesterday" evokes the 1956 discovery of crude oil in Oloibiri—an event widely commemorated by the Nigerian state as the dawn of modernity and economic promise. Contrary to the promise of development and economic growth, the oil exploration pushes the Niger Delta to a wasted future. The Niger Delta is the second largest wetland and the largest in Africa. Sitting on a massive reserve of crude oil, which is estimated to be around 34 billion barrel, Nigeria has been subject to gruesome environmental injustices leading to a poor socio-economic status for the country (Bamidele & Erameh, 2023). The issue has been exacerbated by the roles of multinational oil corporations and the federal government. The activities of these corporations in the region have contributed significantly to environmental degradation, which in turn has led to socio-economic inequality (Ebegbulem, Adams, & Abumbe, 2022). The government's failure to regulate the activities of these corporations and enforce environmental laws has only worsened the situation. Nigerians have been generally left to suffer the consequences of environmental pollution, including health problems, loss of livelihoods, and displacement.

In Garricks' fictional town of Asiama, that same "yesterday" inaugurates a future foreclosed, what is memorialized nationally as the origin becomes an ending, locally. The novel is not based on a linear narrative of development; it rather foregrounds oil as the means through which life only fractures.

Traditional ecocriticism centres on its concern of the preservation of an imagined pristine wilderness. However, the twenty-first-century environmental humanities have shifted their concerns toward the uneven consequences of modernity. Petrofiction as a genre of literary fiction, in this context, interrogates the human and ecological cost of the extractive capitalism. It focuses the present era as Petrocene, an era defined by fossil-fuel modernity and its uneven consequences. Within this framework, Garricks' narrative belongs to a body of African petrofiction that interrogates. The Niger Delta is not rendered as

untouched nature but as a lived environment transformed by pipelines, gas flares, oil spills, and militarized surveillance. It is a space where ecological degradation and social instability converge, exposing the entanglement of environment, politics, and capital.

This paper argues that *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* disrupts the dominant narrative of oil as progress by dramatizing what Rob Nixon terms: "slow violence". Slow violence is a form of violence that is incremental, accretive, and often invisible. In Asiama, devastation does not occur solely through spectacular explosions or armed conflict; it unfolds gradually through contaminated water, infertile soil, economic dispossession, and psychological despair. Such violence resists media visibility precisely because it is temporally dispersed. Garrick's narrative strategy mirrors this condition: the fragmentation of personal histories and communal memory reflects an environment in which cause and consequence are stretched across decades.

Reading the novel through the lens of neocolonialism and environmental justice further reveals how oil extraction reconfigures sovereignty and belonging. Although Nigeria has political independence, multinational oil corporations and complicit state actors continue patterns of resource control that echo colonial extraction. Asiama's inhabitants are positioned as expendable subjects within a global petro-economy, their land transformed into a sacrifice zone for national revenue and transnational profit. Environmental degradation is inseparable from structural inequality; those who bear the ecological costs reap the fewest benefit. The novel foregrounds this injustice by tracing how dispossession operates across generations; binding characters to a history they did not approve of, yet, cannot escape. Ultimately, Garrick suggests that oil extraction does not merely pollute rivers and farmlands—it alters the very experience of temporality. The promise of "tomorrow" is perpetually deferred, while the trauma of "yesterday" remains unresolved. In Asiama, time is suspended between anticipation and loss, progress and ruin.

Theoretical Framework:

The environmental crisis depicted in the novel necessitates a theoretical framework that transcends traditional western ecocritical boundaries. To map the temporal disruption and lost future of the Niger Delta, this study employs a methodological synthesis of Slow Violence and Neocolonialism, situated within the broader discourse of Petrofiction. A fundamental prerequisite for understanding the ecological crisis in the Niger Delta is the interrogation of the cultural narratives that authorize environmental exploitation. Lawrence Buell (2005) identifies "technodominationalism" as a primary ideological root, defined as the long-standing belief that humanity possesses a "divine authorization to dominate and

control the natural world" (1–3). This hierarchical framework, often traced to a literal interpretation of the Biblical mandate in Genesis to "have dominion," creates a binary that places human progress above ecological integrity. Buell (2005) contrasts this Western hierarchy with Mayan mythography, which emphasizes a "shared system of survival" where humans are created from the earth (corn) with animal assistance (p. 6). While the dominion model justifies the subjugation of the Niger Delta's nonhuman life for technocratic benefit, an ecocentric reading—informed by indigenous or relational perspectives—unveils the interdependence that the oil industry seeks to sever.

The environmental degradation in the Delta is not merely a consequence of modern industry but is deeply embedded in the structures of neocolonialism. Huggan and Tiffin (2010) argue that the colonial project was predicated on a Western construct of humanity that viewed non-European territories as "non-human" or "unused" spaces (p. 6). This "not-human concept" allowed colonial powers to treat indigenous lands as vacant or underutilized, justifying appropriation and extraction (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010, p. 5). In the contemporary context of Garricks' novel, this neocolonial mentality persists. The Nigerian state and multinational corporations operate through a nexus of anthropocentrism and Eurocentrism, where the Niger Delta is treated as a sacrifice zone. This framework rationalizes the depiction of the Delta's inhabitants as primitive or animal-like, effectively legitimizing their marginalization and the destruction of their lived environment (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010, p. 6).

To map "temporal disruption" in *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*, it is essential to look deeper into the structural mechanics of Rob Nixon's (2011) theory. Nixon argues that the primary challenge of slow violence is representational: how can we convert "attritional catastrophes" that lack a definitive explosive climax into narratives that demand urgent attention? He defines slow violence as "a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and diffusive, its calamities reaching across a range of temporal scales" (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). This temporal reach is what creates the "lost futures" in Garricks' narrative. The pollution in the Niger Delta does not just destroy the present; it engages in what Nixon calls "temporal displacement," where the environmental costs are deferred to future generations who must inhabit a landscape already foreclosed by the toxic legacies of the past. By focusing on the delayed effects of oil seepage and gas flaring, Garricks illustrates how the environment becomes a site of long-term casualty that disrupts the linear progression of community life (Nixon, 2011, p. 3). This effectively shifts the reader's focus from the immediate event to the long-term process, making the invisible destruction of the Delta's ecosystem visible through the lens of generational trauma.

The expansion of petrofiction beyond its initial definition is crucial for analyzing the socio-political landscape of Asiama. While Amitav Ghosh (1992) originally viewed the oil encounter as a difficult subject for the traditional novel due to its trans-territorial and technical nature, contemporary scholars argue that petrofiction has evolved into a vital tool for environmental resistance. As Imre Szeman (2017) notes, we live in an era of "petromodernity," where our very social structures and cultural imaginaries are fuelled by oil (p. 3). Similarly, in this novel, petrofiction functions as a corrective to the distorted visibility of global capital. Michael Rubenstein (2014) emphasizes that the "infrastructure of oil" often remains invisible to those who benefit from it, appearing only as a "background utility" (p. 16). However, for the postcolonial subject, the infrastructure of pipes, flares, and spills is a foregrounded reality. Garrick utilizes the genre to expose the disruptive structure of the oil industry—a system where corporate interest exert a sovereign-like power over both human and non-human life. By documenting the unreal level of degradation that Graeme Macdonald (2017) fears may seem hyperbolic, Garrick anchors the dystopia elements of the novel in the material reality of the Niger Delta, transforming petrofiction from a mere sub-genre into a "literary mapping of ecological injustice" (Macdonald, 2017, p. 290).

The Background of *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*:

Niger Delta is situated in the southern part of Nigeria; it is made up of Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta and Rivers. The land is endowed with natural resources especially oil but since the discovery of oil the people knew no peace again. Gas flaring, oil spillage, noise and pollution became the condition of their once serene environment. Due to the condition that oil and gas flaring turned the environment into, the people feel raped of their resources, lives and way of life so they feel entitled to the income gotten from the oil. Unfortunately, they were left with little or nothing which lead to the feeling of betrayal thus sprouting up hatred on the part of Niger Delta Youths. Ejibunu highlights the reason for the Niger Delta crises, they include; poverty, environmental degradation, deprivation of means of livelihood, underdevelopment, insufficient employment opportunities, human rights violations, bad governance, and incompetence by the federation (9-20). It is still a controversy as to whether the discovery of oil in 1957 has been more of a curse than a blessing to the people of the Niger Delta that suffered terribly from oppression, brutality and economic marginalization as a result of bad governance (26). A UNDP report once referred to the region as one of the world's "starkest and most disturbing examples of the resource curse" This clearly shows that oil has done more harm than good to the land and its people. Crude oil is present in commercial quantities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The history of oil in Nigeria is traced to 1956, but by the year 1958, it was already generating revenue for the country. According to Ibaba Samuel Ibaba:

> The country moved away from agriculture, which hitherto provided the revenue base and to dependency mainly on oil for revenue and foreign exchange (Usman, 2008). Notably, oil and gas contribute 40 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 90 per cent of total earnings, and 87 per cent of gross national income (Akinola, 2010). The country earned $500 billion from oil between 1960 and 2006 (Nafziger, 2008). Other estimates in dictate that the country also generates $4 billion annually from the export of natural gas (Obi, 2009; Ibaba et al., 2012: p. 219)

These scholars underscore the central paradox of this study: despite the immense wealth generated by the petroleum industry, both the nation and the specific producing region remain among the most impoverished areas in Africa. Poverty is not a strong enough term to describe the prevailing problems in the Delta region. The people can barely survive on their main source of livelihood: fishing and farming.

The absence of sustainable programs to protect the environment, coupled with systemic mismanagement, served as a primary catalyst for the region's uprisings. These conflicts are a direct response to the degradation of the people's ancestral lands and the state's failure to ensure environmental safety. It became more persistent with the murder of Ken Saro Wiwa and eight others on 10 November 1995 (Peel, 2009, 3). It suggests therefore that the lack of government interest and political will to listen to the plea of the people whose lives have been threatened by the incessant oil leakage led to environmental militancy in the region. Extensive scholarship corroborates the presence of systemic state corruption, which directly facilitates the violation of both human rights and environmental protections. The novel discusses the lives of four friends and gives each of them a platform to narrate their perspectives. The narrative focuses on the prevalent socio-economic and socio-political concerns in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, where it is set. Garrick paints pictures of the devastating effects of mismanaged oil drilling in Asiama and its environment and how corruption aids it to flourish unchecked. These friends are Tubo who works for Imperial Oil, Kaniye who is trained as a lawyer but decides to be a cook, Doye who is also known as Doughboy and who is the leader of one of the militants' groups, and lastly, Amaibi, the protagonist who is a lecturer and the said environmentalist. He is asked to help deliver the ransom demanded by Doughboy for the release of a kidnapped white expatriate, but the unexpected death of Brian Manning (the kidnapped victim) puts him in trouble with "the powers that be". He manages to escape being sentenced as Kaniye defends him in court. Doughboy is also eventually killed.

The Architecture of Neocolonialism in Asiama:

The discovery of oil in Asiama in 1970 in *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* initially generates communal optimism, as the inhabitants anticipate infrastructural development, employment opportunities, and social transformation. Oil appears as the long-awaited bridge between marginalization and modernity. Yet this optimism rapidly devolves into disillusionment. Rather than inaugurating prosperity, oil extraction ushers in ecological devastation, economic dispossession, and political exclusion. This transformation may be read as a form of internal imperialism in which multinational corporations, in collaboration with the postcolonial state, reproduce colonial patterns of extraction and abandonment. Political independence proves nominal, while economic sovereignty remains compromised. The oil economy consolidates wealth at the centre and leaves the periphery environmentally degraded and structurally impoverished.

The gas flare that dominates the landscape becomes the novel's earliest and most persistent symbol of this betrayal. Tubo identifies the distant inferno as "hellfire," describing it as "raging unending, emitting black smoke, and sprouting from what looked like a vertical pipe… visible from everywhere on Asiama Island". Although the boys do not initially understand its technical function, they instinctively recognize its destructive presence. Amaibi explains: "It is something called a gas flare"—ironically described as "a gift of the Imperial Oil company to the people of Asiama." The rhetoric of gift exposes the violent irony of corporate benevolence and exemplifies the discursive strategies of neocolonial capitalism, in which environmental degradation is reframed as development. The flare's permanence—visible from everywhere—symbolizes the inescapability of extractive domination. It functions not merely as industrial infrastructure but as a monument to ecological occupation. (Garrick, 2010, p.80)

Environmental degradation intensifies through recurring oil spills that contaminate rivers and extinguish aquatic life. Doye recounts: "We woke up one morning to see oil, thick and black, floating on top of the brown water of the river. The river became sluggish in its flow, as the oil gradually choked its life away… I sat on the banks and watched dead fish, turned on their sides, slowly drift by. The river stank. Papa called it an oil spill" (Garricks, 2010, p.97). This passage exemplifies what Rob Nixon theorizes as "slow violence," defined as environmental harm that is incremental, accretive, and frequently invisible within dominant political discourse. Nixon argues that such violence is "neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive" (Nixon, 2011). The river does not explode dramatically; it is slowly suffocated. The phrase "gradually choked its life away" mirrors the attritional logic of slow violence, whereby ecological ruin unfolds over time, eroding livelihoods and futures without attracting sustained global attention. Asiama's suffering becomes normalized, its catastrophe dispersed across time and space, thereby evading accountability.

The operations of Imperial Oil replicate colonial economic structures in which raw materials are extracted from peripheral regions for the enrichment of metropolitan centres. Employment within the oil sector is monopolized by outsiders, while indigenous inhabitants are relegated to menial labour or outright exclusion. Soboye exposes the systemic corruption surrounding oil bunkering: "Oil bunkering is not the same as stealing meat from somebody's pot. The government has a hand in it… the navy turns aside as they sail away with oil. It is the biggest business in Nigeria. And except these people approve of you, you cannot enter the business" (Garricks, 2010, p. 92). His testimony reveals collusion between state apparatus and illicit capital accumulation, reinforcing the neocolonial argument that postcolonial governance often sustains extraction through institutional complicity. The state, rather than protecting its citizens, becomes an intermediary in the global circuit of capital, reproducing the asymmetries of colonial rule.

The conversation between Dr. Akassa and Mr. Granger further underscores regulatory impunity and environmental double standards. When Dr. Akassa inquires about the 2004 flare-out deadline, Mr. Granger responds: "I appreciate your frustration over this issue. As you know, the federal government has issued a 2004 flare-out deadline to oil companies... All I can say is that Imperial Oil and other major oil companies has made a commitment to end gas flaring in the near future. We hope...". Dr. Akassa challenges this evasiveness: "Why isn't Imperial flaring gas in Venezuela or Libya? ... Does Imperial Oil have a ministerial certificate to flare gas in the Asiama Field?" (Garricks, 2010, p. 15–16) The "uncomfortable silence" that follows signifies corporate evasion and the absence of enforceable environmental accountability. The comparison with Venezuela and Libya highlights the uneven geography of environmental governance: practices unacceptable in the Global North or strategically powerful states are normalized in marginal regions such as the Niger Delta. Neocolonial occupations illuminate this asymmetry as a function of global power hierarchies that render certain landscapes sacrificial.

Militancy emerges within this context of structural exclusion. Doye (nicknamed "Doughboy") articulates the despair of a generation: "Our people are left with menial jobs... so since I cannot work as an engineer with my useless two-one. I would rather be a militant" His assertion: "There is no future for the children of the Niger Delta. Their tomorrow is already dead. It died yesterday" captures the temporal foreclosure produced by slow violence. Militancy thus becomes a reaction to systemic marginalization, an attempt to transform invisible suffering into spectacular disruption. When questioned about kidnapping expatriates, Doye explains: "It's not about helping the people of the Niger Delta… It's about making it difficult for the bloodsuckers to loot our soil. It is war… I know nothing I do will change the system. The system has

made trillions of dollars from persistently brutalizing and sodomising my people". The insurgency constitutes counter-violence against extractive capitalism; from Nixon's perspective, it represents a desperate strategy to render slow violence visible through immediate spectacle (Garricks, 2010, p. 151-248).

Nevertheless, the novel maintains ethical complexity by foregrounding the self-destructive consequences of eco-sabotage. Doye justifies his actions by insisting, "...I am just taking my share of oil money..." (152), and further rationalizes: "Everyone else is milking our oil. The government has sold the oil that will be drilled in the next decades. The politicians and the military boys have shared oil block among themselves..." (Garricks, 2010, p. 152- 235) While these statements expose structural injustice, the resulting acts: illegal bunkering, pipeline vandalism, and kidnapping generate additional oil spills and ecological harm. The destruction of biodiversity, contamination of soil and water, and proliferation of hydrocarbon pollution exacerbate the suffering of already vulnerable communities. As environmental critics such as Lawrence Buell argue, environmental degradation is inseparable from social injustice; the polluted landscape mirrors degraded social relations. The Niger Delta crisis thus reveals the interpenetration of ecological and political violence.

The novel further situates contemporary oil exploitation within a longer genealogy of imperial intrusion through its oceanic imagery. Maritime routes first bring Portuguese traders, whose presence leaves behind half-cast children—embodiments of sexual exploitation and racial hierarchy. A century later, British ships arrive: "Time passed. A century later, five British ships set out from Liverpool and Bristol with a cargo of muskets, alcohol and cloth. They stopped by the scenic Asiama Island… Like the Portuguese before them, the British were also interested in the commerce of flesh, but in flesh commerce that did not mean sex". (Garricks, 2010, p. 56) The repetition of maritime arrival underscores the cyclical logic of exploitation. The ocean becomes the earliest infrastructure of global capitalism, facilitating slavery, trade, and eventually oil extraction. Historical amnesia—ever forgetful of their history—enables the persistence of neocolonial dependency.

The novel articulates Asiama as a site where environmental degradation and human marginalization are mutually reinforcing. The river gradually choked, the sky perpetually lit by gas flares, and the ocean that delivers successive waves of exploiters together form an ecological archive of domination. Garrick's narrative insists that the ecological crisis of the Niger Delta cannot be divorced from the political economy of extraction that sustains it. Oil, rather than symbolizing liberation, becomes the medium through which colonial structures are re-inscribed in postcolonial form. The devastation of land and water

is inseparable from the erosion of dignity, identity, and futurity, confirming that neocolonial extraction operates not only upon territory but upon time itself.

Mapping Slow Violence: The Ecology of Ruin

The militant activities in Nigeria's Niger Delta, which encompass illegal oil-siphoning and pipeline tampering, have precipitated severe environmental degradation, with far-reaching consequences for local communities and the broader ecosystem. These acts often result in oil spills that devastate terrestrial and aquatic environment, leading to soil erosion, contamination of underground water sources, and destruction of flora and fauna. Ike Okonta and Douglas Oronto (2008) highlight the environmental havoc wrought by oil spills, emphasizing that such spills have rendered life tremendously challenging for residents, disrupting their livelihoods and self-sufficient ecosystems (p. 45). The degradation of farms, fish habitats, and water sources has profoundly altered the region's ecological balance, making it difficult for communities to sustain their traditional ways of life. Benjamin Okaba, leader of the Ijaw National Congress, underscores this disruption by noting that oil spills severely affect aquatic life, harming water organisms and benthic species, thereby threatening biodiversity (Okaba, 2010, p. 112).

The destructive impact of oil spills extends beyond immediate ecological damage, affecting the physical health of the environment and the mental and social well-being of the inhabitants. UNEP's 2006 report documents a catastrophic incident at Yorla 13 oil well, where a month-long fire caused extensive vegetation loss and dispersed partly burned hydrocarbons across farmland and residential areas (UNEP, 2006, p. 100). This incident exemplifies how fires associated with oil spills can produce harmful emissions and pollutants that travel considerable distances, contaminating air, soil, and water. Such environmental destruction not only diminishes biodiversity but also leads to land loss and soil infertility, which impairs agricultural productivity and exacerbates food insecurity. As Patrick Bond (2011) observes, "oil bunkering and pipeline sabotage... are similarly fraught given the collateral damage including explosions and ecological devastation" (p. 76). The clandestine nature of these activities ironically endangers the very environment militants aim to protect, revealing a tragic paradox.

The narrative of environmental degradation is further reinforced through literary depictions, such as Doye's account of an oil spill on the Asiama River, where thick black oil suffocated the water and killed fish, illustrating the immediate and visceral impacts of ecological sabotage (Doye, 76). Garricks (2019) vividly describes scenes of fire and death following pipeline explosions, highlighting the human toll of such attacks with imagery of corpses and burnt flesh—testaments to the destructive consequences of militant actions on both human and non-human entities (p. 79). These incidents exemplify how oil spills

and explosions devastate biodiversity, decimating aquatic species, destroying vegetation, and polluting the air, thereby undermining the region's ecological integrity.

Research indicates that oil spills severely impair soil fertility, rendering crucial nutrients like nitrogen and oxygen inaccessible to plants. This disruption hampers agricultural productivity and leads to food shortages, which exacerbate malnutrition in oil-dependent communities (Amadi & Nwosu, 2015, p. 67). The long-term contamination persists for decades, sometimes over forty years after the initial spill, illustrating the enduring nature of ecological damage. Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence provides a compelling lens through which to interpret these phenomena. Nixon (2011) describes slow violence as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space" (p. 2). Oil spills exemplify slow violence because their ecological and health impacts unfold gradually, often unnoticed until catastrophic consequences emerge, and they disproportionately affect marginalized communities, echoing Nixon's critique of environmental injustices.

Nixon further emphasizes that the resource curse (where natural resource wealth leads to societal misfortunes) entails "the fortunes and misfortunes" linked to resource discovery, including environmental destruction and social dislocation (Nixon, 2011, p. 23). He argues that this curse involves questions of ownership, dispossession, and alienation, which are embedded in the extractive industries' operations. The exploitation of Niger Delta's resources exemplifies this, where the pursuit of economic gains has led to environmental degradation, impoverishment, and social alienation, reinforcing Nixon's assertion that "the natural world is an integral part of society" and that damaging it ultimately harms human well-being (Nixon, 2011, p. 31).

The novel's title suggests a loss of hope and the perpetuation of a cycle of violence and environmental neglect—"yesterday" representing past grievances and "tomorrow" symbolizing potential future despair. The characters' personal tragedies, including loss of limbs, death, and social dislocation, serve as metaphor for the broader ecological and socio-political decay wrought by oil extraction. Garrick's depiction of youth suffering untold hardship and succumbing to militancy reveals the destructive cycle perpetuated by government insensitivity and environmental neglect (Nixon, 2011, p. 44) The narratives and reports illustrate how the Niger Delta exemplifies slow violence—the gradual, often unseen destruction of ecosystems and communities caused by relentless oil pollution and industrial waste. Nixon (2011) argues that "the damage to the environment is often invisible and delayed, accumulating over time until it manifests in catastrophic events" (p. 9). The persistent contamination of soil, water, and air exemplifies this, as the cumulative effects undermine the region's ecological resilience and threaten the

health of its inhabitants. The metaphor of the "phantom limb" underscores the need for society to recognize and address the slow, insidious violence wrought by environmental neglect. Only then can meaningful action be taken to break this cycle of destruction and foster ecological and social healing. (Nixon, 9-44)

Temporal Disruption: Why "Tomorrow Died"

In Garrick's novel, the inhabitants of Asiama epitomize a community caught in a state of helplessness and disillusionment, primarily due to leadership failure that has persisted since Nigeria's independence. Despite the region's abundant crude oil reserves, the people suffer from a stark lack of basic infrastructural amenities such as roads, schools, electricity, clean water, and hospitals. Garrick poignantly concludes that the Niger Delta has no future—its tomorrow has already died yesterday—highlighting a profound sense of lost hope and broken promise. This statement critically underscores the persistent political and economic stagnation driven by leaders who have remained in power for decades, shamelessly clinging to their positions while neglecting their communities' needs. The novel's narrative subtly mocks these leaders, portraying them as greedy, self-serving individuals who refuse to relinquish power or usher in genuine change. Coupled with this is the portrayal of contemporary youth, who appear disillusioned, fragmented, and disempowered—blaming the government for their plight but lacking the unity or vigour to effect change. The youths' loss of hope, pride, and future is painfully evident; yet, Garrick hints that this future is not entirely beyond redemption. There remains a possibility to forge a new system—one that unites the people, offers hope to the hopeless, and empowers the weak. However, entrenched systems of Godfatherism and political patronage continue to perpetuate a cycle of stagnation, where the older generation's grip on power prevents meaningful progress. This scenario reflects a broader critique of African leadership where many rulers are depicted as exploitative figures—thieves and leeches siphoning the lifeblood from their citizens under the guise of honour. Such leadership fuels the slow violence that devastates communities over time, eroding their future and reinforcing the notion that the tomorrow of these regions has been irrevocably lost—an on-going cycle of decay that underscores the urgent need for systemic change.

Conclusion:

Tomorrow Died Yesterday serves as a warning for the new millennium in terms of the global economy's dependence upon extractivism, which leads to temporal disruption; it is neo-colonial extractivism, perpetually undermining the ecological and social futures of a region. The novel underscores that the Niger Delta's ecological degradation and human suffering are not isolated incidents but are part of a

broader, systemic pattern of neocolonial exploitation driven by multinational oil corporations and complicit government entities. Garrick's narrative aligns with Nixon's theory of slow violence, revealing how environmental and social harm compounds gradually over time. This harm may remain often invisible to the public eye, and the active conflicts or protests after the harm is made may be ineffective for reviving the health of both . The data on eco-sabotage activities—such as the $140 million in damages caused by ELF or the $20-25 million annual costs of eco-terrorism in U.S. national forests—highlight that even militant resistance, aimed at protecting the environment, can inadvertently contribute to on-going suffering and destruction. Garrick's stance condemns both the violence inflicted by militants and the destructive pursuits of neo-colonial capitalism, emphasizing that without genuine environmental stewardship and systemic change, the future remains bleak. Ultimately, the novel warns that continued reliance on extractivist economies and the perpetuation of slow violence threaten to erase the future of vulnerable communities, making a compelling call for a re-evaluation of our global ecological and political trajectory towards sustainability and justice.

Garrick disrupts the reader's comfort by refusing a happy ending. By killing the "Tomorrow" of his characters, he forces the readers to realise that the Niger Delta's tragedy is just not a local issue, but it is a global one, which needs all our participation for a "Petro-dialogue", -thus to enable ourselves to move beyond the "deadly yesterday" and towards a reclaimed, sustainable future.

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