

An ecofeminist analysis of Caridad Svich's *The Way of Water*

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Abstract

The ecofeminist theory has become a new genre in theatrical studies. It integrates the feminist theory with the ecological theory to study and address all types of dominance. Therefore, it is an ideology that links patriarchal and capitalist supremacy to climate change, gender equality, and social injustice. This paper tries to apply the ecofeminist theory to Caridad Svich's play *The Way of the World* (2013) to show how women have been depicted in environmental injustice. It tries to reveal the main reason for women and nature's oppression. Caridad Svich, who won the 2023 Flora Roberts Award from The Dramatists Guild, is a US Latina playwright who has written more than 50 plays and has received many prizes that testify to her success. In her play *The Way of Water*, Svich depicts how ecological disasters affects humans and nonhumans. This paper tries to focus on the effect of that ecological crises on women as well as nature and to expose the dominant power which causes their degradation.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, ecology, feminist, dominance, environmental injustice

1. Introduction

The ecofeminist theory has been increasingly used as a methodology to analyze a literary text. It is the only theory that can explain the connections among all forms of domination such as neocolonialism, capitalism,

patriarchy, and climate change. The fundamental tenet of ecofeminism is that environmental injustice is sanctioned by the same ideology that justifies discrimination against people based on their race, class, or gender. In addition, due to the fact that it recognizes how all forms of oppression have been interrelated and reinforced one another; ecofeminism not only opposes the oppression of women and nature but also it looks for the cause that contributes to the continuous subjugation and exploitation of humans and nonhumans; the methodology of power has the same negative impact on all creatures, especially women and nature.

As theatre is considered one of the crucial medium in increasing audience awareness, ecofeminism has emerged as a new genre in theatre aiming to explore the interaction of dominant systems which has subjugated people as well as nature. One of the contemporary playwrights who is concerned with increasing audience awareness is Caridad Svich. She believes in the significance of theatre in shaping the awareness of audience. Svich says, "I want to use the theatre to open space and hold it open. Create opportunities that I think the rooms we call theatre can afford us to take a chance to just apply the brakes a little and see what we are, to think about matters and think about what matters" (2017, p. 23). Besides exploring several issues, Svich gives great importance, in her recent plays, to ecological crises. Svich wants to encourage her audience to investigate the several shapes of oppression, which have caused environmental crises, to find solutions to these disasters.

This paper tries to apply the ecofeminist theory to Svich's play *The Way of Water* to examine the effect of dominant systems on women as well as nature. It manifests the image of women in environmental injustice. It investigates how dominant system has abused oppressed people and nature. The paper starts with a summary of ecofeminism. The paper also shows briefly Svich's life and career and explores the important themes which Svich has explored in her plays. Then, the paper tries to analyze Svich's play *The Way of Water* to show the image of women and nature in the dominant system.

2. Ecofeminism

In its broad sense, ecofeminism has been viewed as both a theory and a movement that makes connections between ecology and feminism. It links

the objectives of natural and feminine liberty and demands an end to all forms of oppression. The famous ecofeminist Greta Gaard suggests that “ecofeminism’s basic premise is that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature” (1993, p. 1). Ecofeminists believe that eradicating human injustice is as necessary as the necessity of eradicating nature injustice. According to Chen Ling, “ecofeminism emphasizes to recognize the importance of ecological system protection from a female perspective and develops its vision of feminism theory in the practice of ecological movement” (2014, p. 70).

Ecofeminism emerged in 1970s as result of the increasing movements which believe in the close relationship between women and nature, like Chipko movement in India and Green Belt movement in Kenya. In 1974, the term ecofeminism was coined by the French feminist writer Françoise d’Eaubonne in her book *Feminism or Death*. She urged women to lead an ecological revolution and create new ties between humans and the environment. At that time, likewise, many feminist writers drew connections between women and nature in their works such as Sherry Ortner, Susan Griffin, and Carolyn Merchant. According to Carolyn Merchant, despite the emergence of ecofeminism in the 1970s, it did not receive attention until the 1980s when the first ecofeminist conference was held in the United States, under the title “Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the 80s” (2005, p. 194). The development of ecofeminism is influenced by feminist and ecological movements, as it is a combined outcome of both movements. Thus, ecofeminism’s development is established on the theoretical outcomes of liberal, cultural, and social feminism and the theoretical outcomes of deep and social ecology. These theoretical outcomes greatly contributed to the formation of ecofeminism’s perspectives. There are three main perspectives which shaped ecofeminism’s strands: liberal ecofeminism, cultural ecofeminism, and socialist/materialist ecofeminism.

Liberal ecofeminists suggests that women should have the same rights as men. Like men, they can protect natural resources and improve the environment. Liberal ecofeminism aligns with reforming

environmentalism's goals to change how people interact with nature from inside the existing governmental system by enacting new laws and regulations. Additionally, liberal ecofeminism attributes the current ecological crisis to the economic growth, which has many negative effects on nature as well as humans. Thus, liberal ecofeminists have urged women to establish their own environmental groups and organization such as the Group of Ten and the California Women in Timber, which help women to improve their own lives and resolve environmental problems (Merchant, 2005).

Cultural ecofeminism is another branch of ecofeminism which promotes the relationship between women and nature because of their gender roles. Cultural ecofeminists believe in spirituality; they believe that goddess and nature worships are considered intimate relationships between nature and women. In fact, cultural ecofeminism supposes that patriarchal culture contributes to both natural and feminine dominance. Thus, to bring end to patriarchal domination, cultural ecofeminists seek to make a change in culture and spirituality. For example, they try to restore old feminine rituals which had been undervalued in patriarchal system such as goddess worship. In other words, the main idea of cultural ecofeminism is its resistance against the repressive force of patriarchy.

Socialist/materialist ecofeminism is "a feminist transformation of socialist ecology that makes the category of reproduction, rather than production, central to the concept of a just, sustainable world" (Merchant, 2005). Socialist ecofeminism believes that women's relationships with nature are both socially produced and genetically predisposed. In contrast with cultural ecofeminism, it aims to free women from the famous assumption that nature and women are associated because of their gender roles, which was served as an excuse for female subjections. They consider capitalist and patriarchal systems the main reason for women and nature's degradation and call for the overthrow of these systems. They criticize natural dominance and gender dominance in all fields such as the social, political, and economic fields. Likewise, they respect women's role in production and reproduction, and emphasize the reproduction of life.

Despite the differences among ecofeminism's strands, ecofeminism has its

main themes, which all strands of ecofeminism agree with them. The most prominent themes are realizing and studying the relationship between the environment and women, and realizing and studying injustice inflicted on the environment and women. Ecofeminists have variety of viewpoints regarding how nature and women are related. For example, while Merchant suggests that the relationship between nature and women exists through culture, language, and history (2005, p. 237), Karen J. Warren points out that the relationship between nature and women exists through language, literature, religion, economy, ethics, society, and epistemology (1990, p. 17). Furthermore, ecofeminists believe that the forces that oppress and dominate women are the same that dominate nature. According to Merchant, there is a historical connection between natural dominance and gender dominance. Merchant points out how intellectual endeavor and mechanical invasion of scientific revolution subordinated both nature and women (2005, p. 201). In addition, Val Plumwood asserts that the relationship between natural domination and gender domination may be traced back to the Western thought of dualism (1993, p. 124).

In fact, dualism is a debatable and critical perspective in ecofeminism. According to Val Plumwood, dualism is “the process by which contrasting concepts (for example, masculine and feminine gender identities) are formed by domination and subordination and constructed as oppositional and exclusive” (1993, p. 31). Many ecofeminists criticize dualistic thought as it is “an alienated form of differentiation, in which power constricts and constructs difference in terms of an inferior and alien realm” (Plumwood, 1993, p. 42). Because patriarchal dualism places both nature and women in inferior classification, ecofeminists seek to reduce patriarchy by alternatives “as evidenced in women’s and tribal culture” (Gaard, 1993, p. 20). Thus, ecofeminists suggest an alternative dualism that value both women and nature, and this is what makes some critics describe ecofeminism as dualistic.

Another significant criticism of ecofeminism is the claim that ecofeminism is essentialist. Elizabeth Carlassare defines essentialism as “the assumption that a subject (for example, a “woman”) is constituted by presocial, innate, unchanging qualities” (1994, p. 52). She adds that “essentialist arguments

posit that women and men are endowed with innate qualities or essences that are not historically or culturally contingent, but eternal and unchanging, an outcome of their biology, which is understood as fixed” (1994, p. 52). Indeed, the claim that ecofeminism is essentialist comes from the cultural ecofeminist thought which asserts the existence of innate relations between nature and women. The essentialist perspective in cultural ecofeminism such as women are closer to nature as they share certain characteristics, has been used to “oppress women, limit their sphere of activity and squelch their potency as social and cultural agents” (Carlassar, 1994, p. 52). So, some ecofeminists (especially, social ecofeminists) have criticized and dismissed cultural ecofeminism because of that perspective.

Regardless of criticisms against ecofeminism, it is an important new theory in the analysis of literary texts. There are many methodological approaches used in applying the ecofeminist theory to a literary text. All, derived from ecological and feminist strategies, aim to apply "the relationship theory between female and nature into a variety of social structures, emphasize the analysis of ecology, gender, class and race, investigate the essential origin of domination system as a whole, and admit the different voices from women of different races, classes, and ages (Ling, 2014, p. 71).

3. Caridad Svich's life and career

Caridad Svich is a contemporary playwright, translator, editor, lyricist, and essayist. She was born on 30th July 1963, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States. Svich is a daughter of Cuban-Argentine-Spanish-Croatian parents: Emilio Dario and Aracely Besteriro. Influenced by the different cultures in which she lived, Svich has a sense of dislocation which has manifested in her thoughts. She says:

This sense of dislocation extends to the fact that as a child and adolescent, I lived in several states: Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Florida, North Carolina, Utah, New York, and California, not to mention many cross-country road trips in between. The nomadic strain was thus instilled in me and has become an inevitable part of my writing vision. Explorations of wanderlust, dispossession, biculturalism, bilingualism, construction of identity, and the many different emotional terrains that can be inhabited onstage form the basis of my plays and other projects. (2014, pp. 13-14)

Svich's writing talent appeared when she was a child. She rewrote the

children's book that her mother had read to her, copying the images and adding totally new narratives beneath them. Since receiving her Bachelor's degree in Creative Arts-Performance from UNC Charlotte (1985), she has written more than 50 full length plays and various short works. She has got a wide reputation; her works have been staged domestically and overseas. Svich's plays were staged in Denver Center Theater, United States; Light House Poole, England; Artheater-Cologne, Germany; Teatro Mori, Chile; and Likhom Theatre, Uzbekistan.

In addition to her plays, she translated nearly most of Federico Garcia Lorca's plays. Svich is also an editor of many books on theatre including *Theater in Crisis? Performance Manifestos for a New Century* (2002), *Divine Fire* (2005), *Out of Silence: Censorship in Theatre and Performance* (2012), *Strategies for Theatre and Performance* (2015), and *Toward a Future Theater: Conversations during a Pandemic* (2021). She has also adapted for the stage novels by Jose Leon Sanchez, Julia Alvarez, and Mario Vargas Llosa, and has reconfigured works from Euripides, Shakespeare, Sophocles, and Wedekind.

Svich has received several awards that testify her success. She won the Flora Robert Award, the 2018 Tanne Foundation Award, the 2018 Ellen Stewart Career Achievement in Professional Theatre, the National Latino Playwriting Award in 2013, the 2012 OBIE Award for Life Achievement in the theatre, the 2009 HOLA Award for Outstanding Achievement in Playwriting, the 2007 Whitfield Cook Award for New Writing, the 2002-2003 TCG/Pew Charitable Trust National Theatre Artist Residency, the 1997-1998 NEA/TCG Playwrights Residency, and the 1994 Rosenthal New Play Prize.

As a founder of NoPassport Theater, Svich believes that theatre is an appropriate medium through which people can think about essential issues and know how to deal with them. So, Svich has tackled many issues in her theatre including contemporary social and political problems such as marginalized people (by class, poverty, gender, authority, and power). According to her words in an interview by Randy Gener, Svich called herself "an arts activist and political artist" (2010, p. 19). She has spent over fifteen years of her writing life as a dramatist telling stories of those marginalized.

Svich is drawn to the complex interaction between class, authority, and power as well as individuals who challenge it. She believes that literary works cannot have immediate change, but it is a seed of change which can occur through time (Svich, 2016, p. 11). Svich explores the theme of identity crisis affecting by her experience as the American-born child of an Argentine father and Cuban mother. In her interview by Leo Adam, she says:

I am first generation American that lives with the memories my parents brought with them from their home countries... Even though I was born here, I was treated sometimes as immigrant myself...I have a couple plays that deal specifically with immigrant characters, but I also have plays that deal with characters who are elsewhere, in unnamed countries outside the U.S., who are thinking about what their America is and the image of America that's exported to them. (2011, p. 13)

As Svich inspired by the ancient Greek writings, especially the image of oppressed women, she has adapted Greek stories. In her adaptation of Greek stories, she demonstrates her feminist theatrical revision of Greek texts. Svich aims to deconstruct the original Greek texts by proposing new reading that opposes the dominant patriarchal narrative to investigate gender issues. According to Helen Foley, the interest in rewriting Greek Texts is a response to "the feminist movement [which] giving a more prominent, complex, or sympathetic voice to a female character whose point of views is less central or even silenced in the Greek originals" (2004, p. 79).

Another important theme which Svich explores in her plays is ecological crisis. Svich is concerned with environmental issues since her inception in writing. Svich's ecological themes show the negative effect of humans on nature, and the effect of ecological crisis on humans. Svich says:

Thinking ecologically about theater and theater making has been there from the start for me, and even in plays where the subject matter is not ostensibly about the environment, it does inform how I approach the conception of work, its structure, and how it lives ultimately with audience. (2017, p. 31)

Svich believes that ecological issues are related to political, economic, social, and cultural issues. So, she has a list of works that focuses on ecological crisis such as *Horizon* (2010), *The Way of Water* (2013), *Up on the Fragile Shore* (2014), *Town Hall* (2017), *The Hour of All Things* (2018), *Ushuaia Blue* (2018), and *Albemarle* (2020).

4. *The Way of Water*

Svich's *The Way of Water* (2013), a full-length play, focuses on the lives of those affected by the Deepwater Horizon BP oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico in 2020 with the spill's aftermath. It is a play of four people who are struggling to get their honorable lives. According to Svich, this play portrays poverty in America. The play takes place in 2010, in a small coastal town, Southeastern Louisiana in Plaquemines Parish, along the Gulf of Mexico. The play has four characters: Jimmy Robichaux, a fisher man; Jimmy's wife, Rosalie Robichaux, a strong and practical woman; Yuki Gonzalo Skow, Jimmy's friend and fellow fisher; and Yuki's wife, Neva Skow, a supportive wife. They are all 30 years old. Both Jimmy's family and Yuki's family have been affected by the BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. They cannot find their daily sustenance, which they get from catching fish, due to the death of many fish resulting from this crisis. In addition, this environmental disaster led to Jimmy's health crisis.

By applying the ecofeminist theory to Svich's *The Way of Water*, the paper reveals the effect of this environmental crisis on nature as well as humans, especially women. In accordance with the socialist ecofeminist approach which asserts that reproduction of life is essential to sustain life over time, it seems that Svich's thoughts support this approach. In the play, Svich asserts that the pollution resulting from the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has been a major environmental disaster, in America in modern time, which has threatened the reproduction of life as it devastated beaches, thousands of miles of fragile wetlands, and killed many aquatic organisms. Furthermore, this crisis led to the deterioration of human health, as it has been shown through Jimmy's character.

The analysis of *The Way of Water* reveals the dominated power which has caused nature and women's oppression. The paper exposes that the capitalist system is the common force that has led to the subjugation of women and the environment. Capitalism is defined as an economic system in which the means of production are privately owned. Private property, the desire for financial gain, and market competition are the pillars on which capitalism is based. Capitalism contributes to environmental injustice as well as humans' oppression. The oppression of humans as well as nature will be shown in two parts. The first part represents the negative effect of capitalist system on

nature (especially water, air, and marine organism). On the other hand, the second part shows the negative effect of the capitalist system on human beings, especially women.

4.1. First: Capitalist system's effects on nature

In Svich's *The Way of Water*, the central events take place in open nature. It is a realistic setting which relates to the main theme of the play. The events take place in US Gulf region which has been polluted by the BP oil spill of 2010. That environmental crisis has had its negative effects on nature as well as human beings. In an interview with Jody Christopherson, Svich points out to the crisis, she says:

The long-term effects of the Deepwater Horizon disaster are still being studied. There is so much we don't know yet, although the fact that two years later, for example, we are seeing mutations of shrimp born with no eyes and are starting to witness severe damage to the coral reefs in the US Gulf are only two signs of many that the "story" isn't over. (2012, p. 6)

The most important setting in the play is in the place where fishermen work along the US coast of the Gulf of Mexico which was damaged by the Deepwater Horizon disaster. In the introduction of her play, Svich asserts that the lasting effects of the spill on the wildlife and the coastal areas have appeared obviously after two years of the crisis. Scientists started to see the spill's long-term repercussions in alarming numbers of altered fish, and crabs, while dolphins and whales continued to be discovered dead at almost double the typical rate (2013). In other words, environmental degradation is caused by capitalism. In fact, the impact of capitalism has been discussed by ecological Marxists who exposed the obvious contradiction between capitalism and nature. They suggest that the increased use of natural resources is necessary for capitalism's development. Therefore, due to the consumption of natural resources during the production process, such expansion of capitalism causes a sharp increase of environmental degradation (Klusenar, 2017, p. 16).

In the play, Nature is dominated and oppressed by a capitalist system. Although the toxic oil has damaged marine life, water, birds, and human beings in that region, but the BP Company has continued its work. That shows the great power of the capitalist system which exploits and destroys nature. In fact, no one can stop capitalism's aims regardless of its damage

to environment. In other words, there are no incentives for protecting the environment under capitalism's market systems. Competition in the market always puts businesses under pressure to reduce expenses and increase profits. Thus, the environment succumbs to the compulsion of the market behavior of the capitalist method of production.

Another example of environmental injustice in the play is the polluted air which comes from the explosion of ammonia in a factory causing chemical fire and polluted air. Again, the capitalist system is primarily responsible for the disaster as the essential characteristic of the capitalist system is the motive to make profit and exploit the subjected. The explosion of the factory is the cost of capitalism. Capitalism not only kills workers, but also poisons their environment. Svich shows this crisis in the following dialogue between Yuki and Jimmy:

Yuki: Air's burning

Jimmy: Everything's burning ...

Chemical plant that had an explosion. Sent thick plumes of smoke up into the sky for hours....

Nasty fire. My cousin Ray worked in that plant. Making some kind of ammonia they use in products and things...Got burned bad. (2013, pp. 23-24)

In the previous dialogue, Svich referred to the real environmental crisis that actually occurred in Waxahachie, Texas in 2013, which is called "west fertilizer plant explosion". As a result of this explosion, according to Vivian Kuo's report in CNN, 15 people were killed and 180 were injured and a lot of buildings, including homes, were damaged, in addition to the environmental degradation which has been caused by the explosion (2012, p. 2). The explosion was brought on by ammonium nitrate, which was stored at the plant, which reacted with the flames and fire. In fact, ammonium nitrate gases have harmful effects on the air, soil, and water.

Not only does Svich's *The Way of the Water* shed light on the environmental disasters in the United States, whether in Louisiana or Texas, but also it reveals the fears of the spread of these environmental disasters to other countries. According to Courtney Ryan (2014), Svich alludes to upcoming environmental disasters on some islands, and that is shown through the dialogue between Jimmy and Yuki, in which they talk about the types of food and the different nature of some islands, such as Japan, Australia, and

Iceland. Svich reflects her fear of global warming which leads to a rise in sea levels and will lead to the extinction of these islands. Climate changes and the environmental crises are products of the exploitative capitalist system.

Unfortunately, the dominating force of capitalism manages to control environmental decision-making, as the rich have the greatest number of resources to defend their interests. According to Joshua Schneyer and Ryan McNeill, although Texas Fertilizer Company did not comply with the environmental safety, the Environmental Protection Agency's report reveals that the fertilizer plant was listed as a place with no risk of fire or explosion (2013). Karen Bell asserts that in the capitalist system, companies need to produce more and more production in order to maintain profits, so most environmental activists see that the capitalist system depletes natural resources and thus contributes to an increase in waste that negatively affects the environment. She adds that the profit motive in the capitalist system encourages cost-cutting, and this causes environmental injustices, for example irresponsible waste processing (2014). Hence, to achieve environmental justice, it seems necessary to completely reduce the negative effects of capitalism or to dismantle the capitalist system completely.

4.2. Second: Capitalist system's effects on women

It is believed that the oppression of women stems from a patriarchal hierarchy that prioritizes men over women. According to Radhika Miller, this hierarchy is far larger than patriarchy and is based on class oppression rather than sexism. She adds that class society is what underlies the subjugation of women because it is caused by economic exploitation in which people are divided into two classes with competing interests. So, capitalism is an obvious example of class society (2018). Since the capitalist system is based on exploitation, especially the exploitation of the marginalized groups. Therefore, the bulk of exploitation and oppression in this system falls on women. The capitalist system has exploited women in all fields of life. This paper shows how this system has oppressed women.

In *The Way of Water*, Svich portrays the image of women under environmental crises. This paper tries to apply the ecofeminist theory to Svich's female characters, in this play, in order to analyze them and find out

how the capitalist system has affected women as well as nature. In accordance with the ecofeminist theory, Rosalie, Jimmy's wife, and Neva, Uki's wife, represent the oppressed women in the capitalist system. In the play, the capitalist system destroys women's life and oppresses them in many fields; it increases women's oppression as it creates economic and social inequality.

Rosalie is portrayed as a working woman and a devoted wife who strives hard to maintain her family. She is "strong yet vulnerable, sensual, practical, a bit of a dreamer" (2013, p. 18). Because of the influence of capitalism which contributed greatly to ecological crises, Rosalie has an infertility problem; this system completely destroyed Rosalie's dream of motherhood. In fact, this oppressive system has ruined her life economically and socially.

Economically, Rosalie's husband was unable to earn a living after the BP oil disaster for two reasons: the first was that this disaster led to a decrease of fish in the sea, so he did not find what he could sell to earn a living. In addition, even if some fish were caught, these fish looked sick, and therefore no one wanted to buy them. Second, Rosalie's husband becomes ill with cancer, which was caused by the toxic oil disaster. As a result, he could not work anymore. Thus, she became the only breadwinner for the family. Rosalie had to work hard in this fierce capitalist system that does not value the lives of workers nor secure their lives.

In accordance with socialist feminism, which believes that dominant the capitalist system is the main reason for women's oppression, Rosalie is oppressed by capitalism. She is a fighting woman who is struggling in this injustice system. Rosalie works in a part-time job and has not got health insurance that guarantees her a decent life. In order to supplement her meagre income, Rosalie creates from recycled plastic pipes many plastic flowers and tries to sell them to gain a little extra money. However, she has not got enough money to take her husband to a doctor. Unfortunately, due to her husband's worsening health condition and the lack of health insurance for him, Rosalie's debt and suffering has increased. In other words, poverty invades Rosalie's life. She has to sell some stuff in her house to cover her bills, especially her husband's hospital bills.

Poverty, which is considered the main product of capitalism, devastated

Rosalie's life. This was also evident when her husband unexpectedly invited their friends, Yuki and Neva, to dinner. Rosalie was very embarrassed because she did not have any kind of food in the house except popcorn. In the play, the most difficult picture of poverty is in the last scene when Rosalie and her husband are forced to leave their home by the bank because of the debts. In fact, capitalism has increased poverty and led to a great deterioration in people's lives, especially the working class. As the exploitive capitalist system relies on the principle of inequality, it leads to the division of society into two classes; a crushed working class that works in favor of increasing the profits of the rich. In other words, the wealth of the rich increases with the increase of the poverty of the workers.

Socially, this oppressive and exploitative system affects Rosalie and Jimmy's relationship. Although Rosalie and Jimmy are a loving and understanding couple, but the increased poverty leads to some negative effects on their relation. Before Jimmy's health deteriorated, and because of the increased economic burdens on Rosalie, especially when Jimmy could not provide any income to his family because of the disaster, Rosalie asked Jimmy, to increase their income, to take the computer job that his uncle told him about, but he refused. In fact, his rejection of the job increases Rosalie's suffering.

Hanna Vorreiter gives an excuse for Jimmy's rejection of the job saying that "Jimmy's refusal stems from his strong attachment to his home. He sees his life path as a fisherman, and, like generations before him, wants to earn his living through fishing" (2022, p. 35). But by applying the ecofeminist theory, which asserts that capitalist and patriarchal systems are the main sources of women and nature's oppression, the paper reveals the main reason for Jimmy's rejection of the job. In fact, Jimmy's refusal stems from his patriarchal ideology that refuses to take orders from a woman. Thus, Rosalie's opinion was not taken into account.

Again, the patriarchal ideology affects the couple's relationship. When Rosalie becomes the only source of income in her family, this intensifies Jimmy's behavior towards Rosalie. He begins to treat her in a different way that makes Rosalie say, "you are turning into a sour man" (Svich, 2013, p. 37). In other words, in accordance with the patriarchal ideology, he does not

accept the idea that a woman is the breadwinner of the family. Thus, Rosalie is oppressed by the dominating systems.

Like Rosalie, Neva suffers from the effects of environmental pollution resulting from the tyranny of the capitalist system. Neva has been Rosalie's best friend since the high school days. She married Yuki, Jimmy's friend, and she is pregnant. Neva is portrayed as a strong and supportive woman. The first appearance of Neva was in scene four, when she went to Rosalie's house to support her after Jimmy's illness. Although she was tired, she did not show her fatigue. However, Neva could not hide the feelings of fear that has invaded her. She fears of losing her fetus. Neva suffers from rashes which are symptoms of environmental pollution resulting from BP oil spill. Therefore, the capitalist system does not only affects the life of the mother, but also affects her fetus; the capitalist system destroyed Neva's right of motherhood.

Being a non-working woman in a capitalist system, Neva faces various obstacles. First, she does not have health insurance. In addition, in a capitalist society, woman's housework such as cleaning, cooking, and taking care of children, is not a commodity. Thus, it is not linked to a wage. In other words, no monetary value is allocated to it in this system. According to Alicia Tahmaseb, housework is linked to economic growth. Without the role of women in houses, you cannot find healthy generations working in the labor markets. Therefore, housework must be classified as an economic activity (2021). Otherwise, women will continue to be exploited in this system as they have been exploited in a patriarchal system. Consequently, Neva suffers from poverty in this system, especially when her husband, Yuki, lost his job because of the BP oil disaster. Her poverty is shown when Neva was thirsty and wanted to drink soda, and due to the lack of money, she could not buy it.

Both working and non-working women in the capitalist system are oppressed. It exploits women at home and outside home. So, women will not be able to obtain their freedom under this system. Therefore, in the play, Svich calls for a protest against the BP Oil Company, a capitalist system. All characters in the play protest against the company except Jimmy, who doubts the ability of the protests to bring about change. However, in the last

scene, when he and his wife is forced to leave their house by the bank because of debts, the couple decide to protest, which is a sign of hope in trying to change the oppressive system.

5. Conclusion

This research paper is an attempt to explain how ecological crisis has influenced human, especially women, and nonhumans in Svich's *The Way of Water*. Although Svich focuses on ecological degradation in her play, the deep analysis of the play reveals another kind of degradation which is women oppression. The paper applies the ecofeminist theory to the play to expose the effect of environmental crisis on women and nature and to reveal the dominant power which has caused this disaster. The analysis finds out that the capitalist system, whose policies are based on exploitation and making profits, is the main cause of women and nature's degradation.

The analysis demonstrates that the BP oil spill crisis is a symbol of the impact of the dominant capitalist system that has destroyed environment and led to its deterioration. In the play, the spill has caused water pollution which has affected the marine life. It led to the death of a huge number of marine organisms such as fish, dolphins, and whales. The analysis also shows another picture of the environmental degradation caused by the capitalist system, which is air pollution resulting from the explosion of ammonia in a factory, which has harmful effects on the air, soil, and water.

Furthermore, the analysis shows how the capitalist system has oppressed women. Due to the effects of capitalism, both Rosalie and Neva are oppressed. The environmental crisis made Rosalie's husband lose his source of income and his health. So, Rosalie becomes the only source of income to her family. She works hard: she works in a part-time job, creates plastic flowers and sells them in order to gain money. Moreover, this crisis affects Rosalie and Jimmy's relationship. Capitalism has increased her poverty and her suffering. Like Rosalie, Neva suffers from the effects of the crisis that has increased her poverty and misery. In addition, the crisis affects Neva's health and therefore it may affect the health of her fetus.

Thus, the ecofeminist analysis demonstrates the impact of the capitalist system on both women and environment and the oppression which has been

caused by this system for each of them. Capitalism destroys Rosalie and Neva's lives to the extent that it threatens their dreams of motherhood and causes severe economic suffering, which negatively affects all aspects of their lives. Likewise, it destroys the environment in which they live; water, air, birds, and fish became polluted. Unfortunately, the capitalist system's oppression to nature and women will continue if this system is not put to an end. In other words, the exploitative capitalist system and any other oppressive system must be dismantled.

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